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DETECTIVE MAGAZINE

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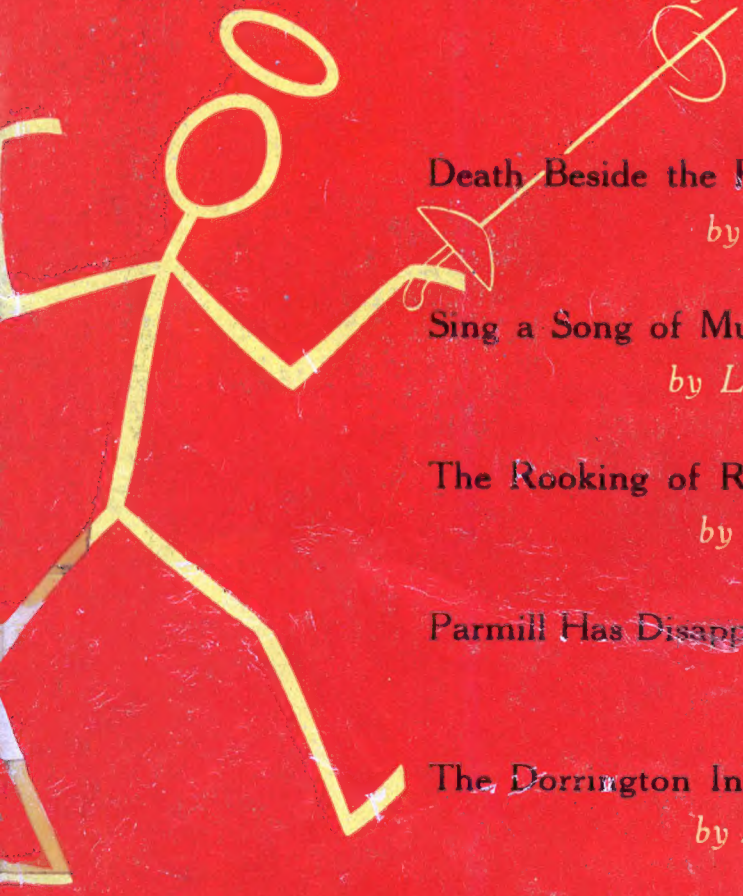
Edited by LESLIE CHARTERIS



Death Beside the Pyramids
by SIR PHILIP GIBBS

Sing a Song of Murder
by LAWRENCE TREAT

The Rooking of Raffles
by BARRY PEROWNE

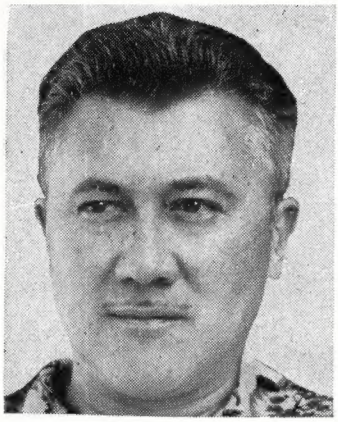
Parmill Has Disappeared
by HUGH WILEY

The Dorrington Inheritance
by AUGUST DERLETH

THE BETTER MOUSETRAP
A NEW SAINT STORY by LESLIE CHARTERIS

SOME OLD, SOME NEW — THE FINEST IN MYSTERY FICTION

PUBLICATION



OUR GUEST LEXICOPHILE this month is Francis D'Amanda, Counselor at Law, of Rochester, N. Y., who quotes the *Oxford Universal Dictionary* as follows:

> SERENDIPITY. 1754 (f. *Serendip*, former name of Ceylon, and *-ity*; coined by Horace Walpole upon the title of the fairy tale The Three Princes of Serendip, the heroes of which "were always making discoveries, by accident and sagacity, of things they were not in quest of"). The faculty of making happy and unexpected discoveries by accident.

My thanks to Mr. D'Amanda for the correction, in which he was soon joined by Mr. J. H. Creighton of Grand Ledge, Mich., and Mrs. Joseph C. Rodgers of Lagunitas, Calif.

Mr. D'Amanda was also the first of these to suggest in answer to the question I raised in the December issue that the patron saint of thieves must be St. Dismas, the legendary name of the "penitent thief" who was crucified with Jesus, who said to him, "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

In this they were supported by Mrs. T. J. Quinlan of Lexington, Mass., Colin J. Guthrie of Denver, Bolling W. Haxall of New York, Mrs. Wing Yee of Pittsburgh, Dr. Henry W. Leetch of Saranac Lake, N. Y., Mary R. Woliston of Los Angeles, James Higgins of New York, Mrs. James A. Dolan of Jersey City, Albert Keehn of Milwaukee, Suzanne Romer of Stony Point, N. Y., Mrs. R. B. Ritter of Waynesboro, Pa., Ruth M. Hughes of Vineland, N. J., Anthea Platt of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, Cpl. Thomas Maguire, USMC, at present of Japan, and even Señor Fulvio Zama of Mexico—a very interesting cross-section of readers.

But as Bertha Nathan of New York points out, St. Dismas is correctly listed in the reference books as the patron of those condemned to death, and *repentant* robbers. In this guise he is recognized by the Prison Chaplain's Association, and there is even a chapel dedicated to him at Dannemora.

A few other serendipitists, however, have sent in a more startling suggestion which is so good that I am going to keep you in suspense for it until next month. Right now, I barely have space to mention that THE ROOKING OF RAFFLES, by Barry Perowne, is a brand-new story about the undisputedly most famous thief in all fiction, which seems rather appropriate company, in this issue for another new Saint story.

Leslie Charteris

Let THE saint

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H. L. Herbert
Publisher

Hans Stefan Santesson
Editorial Director

Leslie Charteris
Supervising Editor

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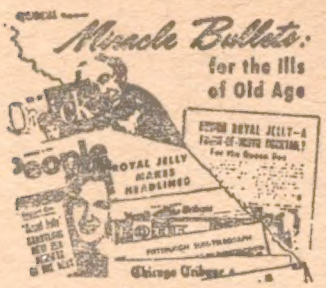
ROYAL JELLY, the Queen Bee's Special Food...ITS SECRET OF PROLONGED LIFE!



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by . . . Leslie Charteris

It was a long time since Simon had seen such interesting jewels, even in this paradise of thieves.

UNTIL his unfortunate accident, Mr. Daniel Tench, in spite of having been christened with such an unglamorous name (though he had used others) had managed to lead what some people would consider quite a glamorous life. Born in a caravan on an English fair-ground, he had grown up with a traveling circus, and spent several years as a merely second-rate acrobat, by Ringling standards, before he graduated to become one of the most successful jewel thieves who ever operated in Europe.

A few small but profitable experiments during his last season under canvas had shown him that the limited athletic gifts which would never get him billing at Madison Square Garden were more than adequate for making illegal entries by various improbable routes; and when a neat second-story job in Deauville produced a pearl choker that brought a million francs even in the market where he had to sell it, Mr. Tench decided that he had found a better way to use his nerve and muscle than by swinging on a trapeze for the niggardly applause of a small crowd of yokels.

One day, someone with more

THE SAINT WAS TO FIND HIS NICHE ON THE RIVIERA, PLAYGROUND OF THE UNGODLY—AND OF OTHER COSMOPOLITANS.

patience and earnestness than this reporter may write an original monograph on the influence of architectural styles upon trends in crime. It is quite possible that the frustrations of the Victorian home were responsible for the popularity of wife-poisoning as an indoor sport during that era. It is certain that the art of Mr. Tench could only have reached its apogee in Europe, where most of the flossiest hotels are still monuments to a period in which ornateness was a synonym for luxury, and no caravanserai was considered palatial that did not have an abundance of balconies, ledges, cornices, gables, buttresses, groovings, ornaments, and curlicues that were made to order for a man of his somewhat simian talents. On the stark façade of the latest Hilton construction he would have been as confused as a cat on roller skates.

In fact, the obvious vulnerability of such gilded barracks long ago created a specialist known in French as a *souris d'hôtel,* or hotel mouse, who would stealthily make off with any valuables that careless guests left unlocked in their rooms. Traditionally, this operator wore only a suit of black tights, to be able to move without rustling and to be as invisible as possible in the dark; and in the merrier myths the tights were always filled to capacity by a beauteous female who, if caught in the act, always had one last card to play against the penalty of being turned over to the police. Mr. Tench, of course, did not have the benefit of what we might call this ace in the hole, in normal situations, but he made up for it with a physical agility that consistently kept the problem from arising. Until the night when his hand slipped.

Personally he was not at all the gay and charming type that would have been portrayed in any self-respecting movie, and even his widow did not waste a minute mourning for him, though she was most annoyed to be so abruptly deprived of the loot he provided, especially the assortment that was his objective on the expedition which he concluded by falling four floors down the front of the Carlton Hotel in Cannes.

None of this might ever have concerned the Saint very much, but for the fact that the place where Mr. Tench made his spectacularly unsuccessful attempt to bounce off a slab of concrete was situated vertically underneath the window of a room in which Simon Templar happened to be registered at the time. As a result, Simon was subjected to a long and hostile interrogation by an inspector of the *Police Judiciaire,* who was convinced that all thieves of Tench's type had an accomplice, and could see no suspect more obvious than a person of such notoriously equivocal reputation.

"Not that I can altogether

blame him," Simon said to Natalie Sheridan. "Danny-boy could have fallen right off my balcony, so to any cop's way of thinking my room could have been his headquarters. This should teach me to stay away from places where the guests have jewels."

He usually stayed at the less showy but just as comfortable Majestic, but he had backed his luck too hard by arriving without a reservation at the height of the season, and had had to take anything he was lucky enough to get. But for that he might not even have met Natalie as he had only two days ago, when he felt too lazy to go any farther than the bar downstairs for his first apéritif.

The terrace of the Carlton at cocktail time is about the busiest place in Cannes, and some of the business is not the kind that the best hotels are conventionally supposed to welcome. But in France, a country with a realistic approach to everything except politics, it is recognized that the very classiest ladies of accommodating virtue, or *poules de luxe,* will inevitably forgather in the very classiest places, where they can expect to meet friends of equal distinction in other fields, and nothing much can be done about it. This does not mean that they are conspicuous, except by being often better looking, better dressed, and better behaved than most of the more strait-laced customers, or that their importunities are a menace to respectable citizens; but a man who looks lonely there always has a chance of catching a not indifferent eye.

Simon Templar was not on the prowl in that way, but he never said No to anything without a second look, and his second look at Natalie was what stopped him. At the first, she was only one of the sea of faces that he automatically scanned with extraordinary selectivity while he seemed to be merely looking for a vacant table: this was the habit of a lifetime whose duration could sometimes depend on seeing everyone before anyone saw him: and her eyes were not the first in which he could sense a possibility of welcome, or her lips the only ones that seemed on the verge of a tentative smile. But these features were so exceptionally attractive that after the first comprehensive glance he had to look at them again individually. And that was when the mouth actually smiled, with a quite brazen forthrightness that was not according to protocol for that place at all, and the possibility of invitation in the eyes bared itself as almost shameless pleading.

The Saint smiled back as if he had just seen her. Dismissing with a casual gesture the intrusive attentions of a waiter who was trying to sell him a seat on the other side of the terrace, he steered as direct a course towards her as the intervening tables permitted, and watched the near-panic in her

eyes relax into simple nervousness as he approached.

"My darling," he murmured. "Have you been waiting long?"

"Long enough," she said.

He sat down.

"What would you have done if I hadn't shown up?"

"I don't know," she said. "Or if you'd turned out to speak nothing but French. . . . But why *did* you speak to me in English? How did you know I wasn't—"

"Us old roués have educated hunches that pay off sometimes."

Another waiter intruded himself, a disinterested mercenary concerned only with one aspect of the encounter. Simon glanced at the martini in front of the girl, which she had scarcely touched, and ordered a St-Raphaël.

"But you don't know," she said almost feverishly, as the waiter went away. "I've got to explain. I'm not the kind of girl you think!"

"Really?" Simon offered a cigarette. "Well, I've got nothing but time. Tell me the story of your life."

It could hardly cover much more than a quarter of a century, he estimated, and any debauchery that she might have crowded into the later years had not yet left any telltale marks on her face. Even at close quarters, her flawless skin did not betray an indebtedness to artful cosmetics. A master coiffeur had done ethereal sculpture in her hair, but would have mortgaged his soul to be able to duplicate with bleach and dye and rinse its cheerfully inconsistent shades of honey-blonde. And if her figure relied on prosthetic support or increment for its extremely interesting contours, that was a remotely potential disillusionment which in these days only nudists never have to risk. From all angles that could be determined in a respectable public place, she was as promising a temptation as any buccaneer ever made no exaggerated effort to resist.

"Natalie Sheridan," she said. "Canadian. Divorced one year. No torch, but I did feel like a fling, and I'd read so much about Europe. The only thing I hadn't thought about, practically, was just how a gal would make out from day to day, traveling alone. It was all right in London and Paris, because I was with friends all the time—but then they were going to Scandinavia and I wanted to see the Riviera. It was even all right in Monte Carlo, though, because I met an English woman on the train coming down, and we sort of stuck together. But I've been here on my own now for three days, and tonight I got desperate."

"It can be a problem, I imagine."

"The first night, I had dinner here and went straight to bed. Lunch wasn't so difficult, somehow. But the second night, I was afraid to go to any fancy place: I

went into another restaurant very early, it was almost empty, and then I went to a movie and went to bed. Tonight I decided it was just silly, I could waste a whole vacation like that, and why shouldn't I act like a healthy modern gal with her own traveler's checks? So I got all dressed up and swore I would have some fun. But—"

"Other people had other ideas about the kind of fun you ought to have?"

"Over here, they don't seem to understand that a gal can be alone because she wants to. If she isn't waiting for one man, she must be waiting for any man. I've never had so many strange men trying to be so charming. Of course, most of them were just devastatingly discreet, but all the same . . . after a while, it gets to be like a kind of nightmare. And then when I felt the waiters beginning to worry about me, it was the end."

"So you decided that if everyone was thinking it, you might as well be it?" he asked, with lazy wickedness.

"Oh, no! But when you came in, I was about frantic, and you looked English or American or—or as if you might understand, anyway. And I did try to pick you up, and I shouldn't be wasting your time. But if you would just have your drink, so that I can sit here for a little while and enjoy staring at everyone else instead of them staring at me, and let me pay for it, and then escort me out so I can make a graceful exit—"

The Saint finally laughed, cutting off her spate of headlong clauses with a muted outburst of sheer delight. He threw back his head and shook with it irrepressibly, subduing only the sound of the guffaw, while the waiter delivered his St-Raphaël and went phlegmatically away.

"Natalie, I love you. I thought I'd been picked up in every way there was, in the course of a misspent life, but you've shown me that there can always be new things to live for." He sat up again, still smiling, and not unkindly. "I'll tell you what. We'll have this drink, and then another, on me, and enjoy the passing show together. And after that, if you can still stand the company, I'd like to introduce you to a little side-street restaurant, Chez Francis, where you can eat the best Provençal sea-foods in this town. Until you've tasted Francis' *coquillages farcis,* you've only been gastronomically slumming."

That had been the beginning of what looked at first like the most beautifully innocuous friendship in the Saint's life story. Her ignorance of everything European was abysmal, but her lively interest made kindergarten instruction surprisingly enjoyable. Experiencing for the first time places and foods and wines that were so familiar to

him, she made them new to him again with the spice of her own excitement. He got almost a proprietary kick out of first emphasizing the murky waters and overcrowded sands of the Croisette beaches, until she was as saddened as a child with a broken toy, and then taking her on a mere fifteen-minute ferry ride to the Ile Ste. Marguerite and over the eucalyptus-shaded walks to the clean rocky coves on the other side which only a few fortunate tourists ever find. And when he gave her one of the glass-and-rubber masks which are almost one of the minimum garments required of Mediterranean bathers today, and she made her personal discovery of the underwater fairyland that only encumbered divers had ever glimpsed before this generation, she clung to him with real sexless tears flooding her big hazel eyes.

Except for that one spontaneous clutch, she was neither cold nor coquettish. It must be faced—or who are we kidding?—that few women could be with the Saint for long and want to leave him alone, and that passes had been made at him in more ways than a modest man would try to remember, and that he could scarcely help revealing even in subtle ways that he was prepared for the worst and poised for evasive action. But Natalie Sheridan gave him nothing to fight. She made no overt attempt to bring him closer to her bed, while at the same time leaving no doubt that he might be very welcome there, some other night, when certain other conjunctions were auspicious. This alone was a refreshing change from more hackneyed hazards.

Nor was she asking to be rescued from any dragons or deadfalls, except the almost adolescent insecurity which had made her beseech him in the first place.

He had told her soon enough, inevitably, but with all the misgivings that could be rooted in a hundred prologues like this: "My name is Sebastian Tombs, believe it or not."

She had said: "Of course I believe it. People always do, when the Saint tells them that, don't they?"

It was at this memorable moment that he finally decided that the time had come at last when the pseudonym which had given him so much childish amusement for so many years must be put away in honorable retirement. He would never feel confident of fooling anyone with it again, and indeed he realized that he had been more than lucky to get away with it on the last several occasions when a perverse sentimental attachment had made him risk it just once more.

But even so, Natalie had surprised him again. She hadn't followed up the identification with the usual babble of silly questions, or embarrassing flattery, or the equally routine recollection of

some flagrant injustice, public or private, which he simply must do something about. She seemed perfectly satisfied to enjoy his company as an attractive man, without pestering him for reminiscences or otherwise reminding him that he was a kind of international celebrity, in the most refreshingly natural camaraderie.

It was almost too good to be true.

On the third evening, she handed him a sealed envelope.

"That's for last night," she said. "I saw exactly what you spent—I've got very sharp eyes. Tonight is on you, if you like. But about every other time it has to be on me, if we're going on doing this. Now don't get on a high horse. I'm not going to insult you by offering more than my share, and don't you insult me by trying to make me a parasite. You don't have to pick up all the checks until you're married to me or keeping me, and I haven't heard you offer to do either yet."

This was altogether too much.

"What on earth did your husband divorce you for?" he asked.

"He didn't. I divorced him."

"Then put it another way. Why did he let you?"

"Why should I tell you what's wrong with me? If I don't, there's always a chance you may never find out."

Nothing else had beclouded the idyllic relationship until Mrs. Bertha Noversham had arrived. Mrs. Noversham was the English woman whom Natalie had met on the Blue Train and whose company in Monte Carlo had postponed the problems of solitude. She had been to Corsica on the yacht of some titled plutocrats whom she had met at a roulette table and adopted as old friends on the basis of having seen them several times in the most fashionable London restaurants—Natalie had already told Simon about Mrs. Noversham's steamroller methods of enlarging her circle of acquaintances.

"Yes, dear, it was utterly divine," Mrs. Noversham said, sinking massively into a chair at their table without waiting for an invitation. "It's a shame you couldn't have gone along, but they did only have the one spare berth, and even I practically had to ask myself. They're really such snobs, though—Sir Oswald wasn't knighted more than five years ago, and they couldn't get over me having the Duke of Camford for a great-uncle, and calling him a silly old fool, which he is."

She was a woman with a gross torso and short skinny legs, who masked whatever complexion she may have had with an impenetrable coating of powder and rouge, and dissimulated her possibly graying hair with a tint of magenta that never sprang from human folicle. In spite of this misguided effort, she failed to look a day under forty-five, which may

have been all she was. Her dress looked as if it had been bought from a black-and-white illustration in a mail-order catalogue. But like magic charms to obscure and nullify all such cheap crudities, she wore *jewels*.

It was a long time since the Saint had seen jewels in quite such ostentatious quantity, even in that traditional paradise of jewel thieves. Mrs. Noversham wore them in every conceivable place and form, and a few that required a long stretch of the imagination as well. She wore them in an assortment of settings so garish that she must have designed them herself, because no jeweller with a vestige of sanity would have banked on a customer falling in love with them in his shop window. If the most casual observer was to be left in doubt as to how she was loaded, it was not going to be her fault.

"I'll have a champagne cocktail," she told the waiter. "This wasn't some itty bitty little yacht, Mr. Templar. It's a small liner. Natalie can tell you—she came to dinner on board before we sailed. But do you know, with all that money, Lady Fisbee still insists on having *all* the wine iced, even the claret."

"You must have been glad it wasn't a longer trip," said the Saint earnestly.

"Well, you know what did cut it short?" Mrs. Noversham said, with the unction of a born connoisseur of catastrophes. "We had a robbery!"

"What, not another?" Natalie exclaimed.

"Yes, dear. Right in the harbor at Ajaccio. Lady Fisbee had given most of the crew a day off to go ashore—it's quite ridiculous the way she pampers those people—and all of us had dinner at the hotel so that they wouldn't have to work. She's obviously still frightened of servants and thinks that she has to make them happy instead of it being the other way round. So there were only two men on board, and they were playing cards and probably drinking, and somebody got on board and jimmied the safe in Lady Fisbee's cabin and cleaned out the two other guests who had anything worth stealing as well."

Natalie turned to Simon and explained: "There was a robbery at the Métropole in Monte Carlo, too, while we were there. We must attract them."

"One of us does, dear. Perhaps it's a good job they couldn't find room for you, after all—you might have lost that nice collar of sparklers."

Natalie fingered the exquisitely mounted string of white fire around her throat almost self-consciously, and said: "I'm not really surprised. That wall safe that Lady Fisbee showed us looked terribly flimsy to me. The best thing about it was the way it was hidden. And that Italian actress said that she'd

never needed anything safer than the bottom of a wardrobe under a pile of dirty laundry. As if professional thieves didn't already know all the hiding places that anyone could think of. Some people almost deserve to be robbed."

"Not me, dear," said Bertha Noversham smugly. "You know where I keep everything I'm not wearing, and nobody could get at that even in my sleep without me raising Cain, unless I was knocked out first, and that kind of thief never goes in for rough stuff. He wants to sneak in and sneak away without anyone having a chance to see him."

"But there are stick-up men, too," Simon mentioned.

"I hope I meet one some day —I'll have a surprise for him," said Mrs. Noversham darkly. "Where are you having dinner?"

She continued to anticipate and accept unuttered invitations with an aplomb that was paralyzing, and never stopped dominating the conversation with the bland assumption that they had only been waiting for her to relieve their boredom.

Before the meal was over, she had blithely devastated a dozen other characters or reputations, some of them belonging to people whom Simon did not even know by name, always in a way that obliquely underlined the impeccability of her own status as a social arbiter. She had a trick of flattering her listeners by taking it for granted that they would sneer at the same things she sneered at, while at the same time implying ominously that they would be wise to make positive efforts to continue in her good graces.

She accompanied them from dinner to the Palm-Beach Casino, and only left them to themselves again when she spotted a famous Hollywood producer and his richly panoplied wife, to whom she was sure she had passed the sugar at tea in the Royal Enclosure at Ascot.

"I'm dreadfully sorry," Natalie said. "She's quite awful, isn't she? But I was so desperately glad to know anyone at all when I first got here, as I told you, that I didn't realize how overpowering she was."

"She has a fabulous technique," Simon admitted mildly. "I can see how anyone with the least insecurity would be a sitting duck for her. Before she's through, that popcorn potentate will be terrified of sticking the wrong fork in his caviar, in case Bertha changes her mind about introducing his wife to the Duchess of Camford, which he would never hear the last of."

"The point is, what are *we* going to do? If—well, if you're interested."

The Saint grinned.

"Tell her who I am. I don't think it really penetrated, when you introduced me. Rub it in. I think that'll scare her off. Of course, she'll try to scare you off

too, but I'm counting on you to resist that."

"I don't think I'd be too shocked if you did steal her jewels. Somebody ought to stop her being so superior about everyone else."

"Where *does* she keep them, by the way?"

"She has a specially-made sort of apron with zipper pockets that she wears all the time; but with her figure, when she's dressed, it doesn't show because it hangs under the bulge, if you know what I mean."

"You couldn't be more discreetly graphic."

Natalie's lovely eyes dilated slightly with belated comprehension.

"I told you, didn't I? Just what you'd want to know, if you were a jewel thief. She was right —some people almost deserve to be robbed."

"I thought you were the one who said that, darling."

"Well, it was right anyway. Don't start to get me confused and frightened, Simon. We've had such a lot of fun, these few days. And I haven't bothered you with any silly questions, have I? Don't let me start now. But you were telling the truth, weren't you, when you told me you were strictly here on vacation?"

"Most strictly," he smiled. "As long as nobody makes the path too straight and narrow for my tottering tootsies. Talking of which, why don't we see if they can still keep time with this team of paranoiac Paraguayans, who are obviously subsidized by the local Society of Osteopaths?"

But that had been the very night during which, somewhat later, Mr. Daniel Tench made his catastrophic verification of the laws of gravity.

The Saint had been detained all morning by the skeptical inspector of the *Police Judiciaire,* and when he got back he had found a brief note from Natalie saying that she had gone to Eden Roc with Mrs. Noversham. By that time it was already late for lunch, and in any case he thought it might be more opportune to leave them on their own. He left an answering message for her to call him when she came in, and thus it was tea-time when she asked him to meet her at the Martinez, and it was there that he got off the wry reflection that could have been an epitaph on their brief friendship.

"This is another place where the guests often have jewels," she pointed out.

"There are so damn many of them," he complained. "Staying away from them is easier said than done."

"And you do like some of the people, don't you?"

"I never thought of you as one of the jewelled ones. Which is a compliment to someone's good taste in settings. Because now I come to think of it, the choice bits of ice I've seen you wearing could

be worth twice as much as all Bertha Noversham's rocks, if they're real. You see how I must have reformed? Something like this has to happen before I even start thinking like a jewel thief."

"That isn't the way Bertha sees it."

Her voice was so cool that he stared at her.

"This is very interesting," he said. "I know it was my idea for you to give me a build-up, but could you have over-sold yourself?"

"I don't know, but I couldn't cover up for you. When Bertha called me about seven o'clock this morning, she'd just woken up and discovered that someone had taken that precious apron-bag of hers, which she was so sure couldn't be done. I almost got the giggles when I remembered that the last thing she talked about on the way home last night was how she was going to break down and take something for her insomnia. But by the time I got to her room, she'd already called the manager, and of course they'd already found that man who fell off a balcony, so the police were there, and she'd told them that I knew about her apron and so you certainly knew too. She was much more help than you thought—she knew who you were all the time. She didn't blame me for letting you get so much out of me, but I couldn't deny that you had."

"Naturally," said the Saint, without rancor. "I gathered most of that while I was being grilled, though the inspector did his best not to let on. But it seems to be bothering you more than it does me."

She twisted her fingers together—he had not seen her so tensely defensive since their first meeting.

"How do *you* explain that man being on your balcony?"

"Just what the inspector asked me. I asked him if there was a French version of the English or American parable that we all know, only don't ask me where it's from, which says that 'if a man only makes a better mousetrap than his neighbor, though he lives in the heart of a wilderness, the world will beat a path to his door.' I'd hate to calculate how many billions the advertising industry has spent to prove that this is the silliest old saw that ever lost its teeth, but it still works for me. At one time in the shocking days you've heard about, I managed to become the best-known alleged crook since Raffles. Since then, there has been the dreariest procession of otherwise bright lads who could think of no more dazzling climax to their careers than to leave their tracks on my doorstep. Brother Tench was only the latest, but he won't be the last."

"He had Bertha's apron, with all her jewels—she got them all back, I suppose you know. But

what would he have done with them in your room?"

"He could've afforded to drop one piece, or even just one stone. And then with only an anonymous phone call, he could've had all the cops concentrating on me for days, while he wrapped up his getaway. As it is, the only thing that really saved me from being stuck was that he had all the boodle on him when they scraped him up."

"Would you mind," Natalie said, in a fainting voice, "if I went back and took a little nap? I guess I'm not used to coping with things like this."

She made him walk back on the other side of the Croisette, the beach side, so that it was easy to look up at the façade of the Carlton as they approached it. When they were almost opposite, she stopped and pointed.

"That's your balcony, isn't it, to the right of the middle, on the fourth floor?"

"Yes."

"Bertha's on the sixth floor, the corner room on the left."

"Is she?"

"And I'm on the floor below you, just a little more to the right."

"I could have figured that from your room number, although you never invited me to see."

"This man Tench had already been to Bertha's room," she said. "Suppose he was on his way to my room from there. That could just as well have taken him past your balcony, just because it was on the way, without him necessarily having the idea of planting something in your room."

The Saint frowned. He had tried hard not to be unduly sensitive, but she was making it a little more difficult with every sentence.

"I suppose so," he said. "I had a theory, but anyone else is entitled to another. I'm only the guy who was in the middle—as you've rather neatly pointed out."

"But that's the whole point, isn't it?" she said. "They don't seem to know where Tench started climbing around from. He didn't have a room of his own in the hotel, apparently. Bertha swears that her door was bolted on the inside, but once he'd got into her room he could still have gone *out* by the door—and why wouldn't he have done that, instead of risking his neck on the outside, if he was in cahoots with you and only wanted to bring you the jewels?"

"Thank you," murmured the Saint, with a trace of irony. "I should have had you with me when I was trying to convince that inspector."

"The only other reason that Tench would have to be on your balcony, except for your theory that he meant to try to frame you, would be if he was on his way somewhere else. To my room, perhaps."

Simon gazed at her for quite a long time.

"Did you figure all that out in your own little head?"

"You don't need to be sarcastic. Of course Bertha and I talked about—everything. And I feel rather ashamed of some of the things we said last night. She was just having a bad spell; but she isn't a bad person."

"Good. Then you don't want me to steal her jewels, after all?"

"Or mine either. I'll take all the blame, I've loved every minute of it, but Bertha reminded me of an old saying—'Lead us not into temptation.' One can ask too much even of a Saint, can't one?" She put out her hand suddenly. "Let's just say good-bye now, and nothing else."

"If that's how you want it, darling. It's your script."

He raised her fingers to his lips, in a gesture that added a uniquely cavalier insolence to a Latin flourish, and watched her force her own way through the endlessly crawling cross-streams of traffic.

If that was how she wanted it, so be it.

He couldn't remember when he had last felt so recklessly resentful. It had become almost a standing joke, for him, to protest that he was always being driven back towards the old bad ways by the people who refused to believe that he had ever forsaken them. But seldom had his admittedly equivocal past been raised to slap him in the face as unfairly as this.

Natalie Sheridan deserved to lose her bloody diamonds.

So did Mrs. Noversham, for helping to put that bee in her bonnet. Simon would have bet anything that Natalie would never have reached the same conclusion by herself. But put two women together, and the ultimate outcome of their mutual catalysis can be predicted by no laws of chemistry or logic.

Simon scowled up again at the front of the hotel into which Natalie had already disappeared, imprinting a certain pattern on his mind.

Then he went up to his room and scowled vaguely out the other way, over the blue bay where speedboats towing aimless but tireless water-skiers cut random patterns between lazily graceful sailing skiffs and mechanically crawling pedalos; but in his mind he saw the same pattern, reversed, in which his window was still a kind of focal center.

Eventually it was the telephone which interrupted his brooding, with a strident abruptness that left him with what he recognized at once as a purely wishful flutter of hope. The uncompromisingly materialistic voice that greeted his response quickly reduced that pipe-dream to its basic fatuity.

"This is Bertha Noversham, Mr. Templar. I'd like you to have a cocktail with me."

"Well, thank you, but I'm not sure that I—"

"Don't tell me that you've got another engagement, because I'm fairly sure you haven't. Anyhow, this needn't take long, and if you'll come to my room you can be sure you won't be embarrassed in public. Just tell me what you like to drink, and I'll order it while you're getting here.

"I remember that you liked champagne cocktails," said the Saint slowly. "Get in a bottle of Bollinger, and I'll help you with it."

The Bollinger was on ice when he arrived, but it was no frostier than the self-assurance of her welcome.

"I'm quite sure you didn't think for a moment that this was just a social invitation," she said, "so I'll come to the point as soon as you've done the pouring. Please use only half a lump of sugar, and scrape it well on the lemon peel—don't put the lemon in. That small glass is cognac, in case you have the common American idea that that improves the taste."

Simon performed the dispensing with imperturbable good humor.

"All right," he said. "Start shooting."

"Very well. I find you quite a likeable person, Mr. Templar, in spite of some things that everyone knows about you. So I'd like to save you from making a serious mistake."

"What about?"

"I understand that until yesterday Natalie was amusing herself by letting you think you were showing her the Côte d'Azur. I don't know how often she's done it before, but she certainly told the same tale to the man who gave her some of her diamonds. That was last year, when I first met her. I knew him from one of the garden parties at Camford Castle—a nice old duffer, but quite senile of course."

The Saint's eyebrows did not go up through his hair-line like rockets through the ionosphere, but that was only because he had spent more time with poker hands than ballistic missiles.

"Now I know why you thought you had to offer me a drink, anyway," he remarked.

"Bernie Kovar was at Eden Roc today—you remember, I was talking to him at the Casino last night. We had lunch together. His wife left for Rome this morning, to do the shops and the museums for a week or two, while he's supposed to be reading scripts. Of course she knows perfectly well what the old goat will be up to most of the time—the gossip columns would tell her if nobody else did—but she only brings it up if he dares to say a word about the money she spends. He didn't waste a minute inviting Natalie to dinner and asking why no one had ever offered her a screen test. It may make you feel a bit better to know that that's

the real reason why she has to shake you off in such a hurry—not because she seriously thinks you might rob her."

"That does sound considerate."

"I don't know what Natalie has told you about her background, but I've heard enough contradictory fragments to believe none of them. I think of her simply as an ambitious girl who is determined to get the most out of her undoubted attractions while they last. That is what every woman does who isn't a 'career woman,' God help her. That's what I was like at her age, and I'm sure you think I haven't outgrown it. The difference is that Natalie wants to get away with murder and still have everyone loving her. She's a dear girl, and I've done a lot for her, and I may go on doing it."

"Then why are you telling me all this?"

Mrs. Noversham took a very healthy, unequivocal swig at her champagne cocktail, and indicated that Simon should replenish the glass.

"Because I'm just selfish enough to want to protect myself. It's all very well for Natalie to spare your vanity by pretending she just thinks it'd be safer not to see you again. But she doesn't even want to take the responsibility for that idea. She had to make you think I put the idea into her head. I didn't care at first; until it dawned on me how dangerous that could be, with a man like you. You'd be perfectly capable of stealing my jewels, if you could, just to pay me back for a thing like that—wouldn't you, Mr. Templar?"

Simon brought the refill back to her, and lighted a cigarette.

"When you phoned, I was thinking along those lines," he said candidly.

"I was sure of it. I don't like being disloyal to Natalie, but there's a limit to how far I can go to cover up for her. My jewels mean a lot to me, and I don't want to worry about your intentions for the rest of the season."

"It's nice of you not to put it that I'd be the first person you'd remind the police about if anything happened to you again like last night."

"I'd prefer to keep this conversation entirely on a pleasant plane. And in any case, I can assure you that nobody, including Natalie, would have much chance of persuading me to take another sleeping pill unless my jewels were in a strong-room."

The Saint released smoke in a very careful ring. He had thought himself beyond being jolted by any magnitude of female duplicity, but he had never personally encountered anything as transcendent as this.

"This makes life rather difficult," he said. "Because now I'm liable to think about unkind things I might do to Natalie, rather than to you. Perhaps that hadn't occurred to you when you

decided to save me from myself."

"I thought I'd made it clear that I was only trying to save *myself*. Or my possessions. To me, you, Natalie Sheridan, Bernie Kovar, and a lot of other people I meet, are all birds of a feather. I think you all deserve anything you do to each other. That's why I can still be amused by Natalie, in spite of what I know about her. But she shouldn't have thrown me to the wolves—or wolf, if I may call you that. If she suffers for it, she has only herself to blame."

"I'd like to put it more bluntly. Suppose she did get robbed—would you feel obliged to tell the police about this conversation?"

She looked him straight in the eye.

"Mr. Templar, if I were sure that as of now you had no grudge against me, I should think it much wiser to mind my own business. It isn't as if Natalie's loss would be irreparable. Bernie will give her plenty more jewels, if she plays her cards right."

"I wish I met more people who were so broadminded."

"However, it won't be easy," Mrs. Noversham said briskly. "Since what happened last night, she swears she'll put all her valuables in the hotel safe the minute she walks into the lobby, each and every time she comes home. There'd have to be a hold-up outside, or somewhere like Bernie's suite AA1 in the new wing of the Hôtel du Cap, where he's sure to have her reading scenes after dinner."

"It would be a rather dramatic interruption."

"I didn't hear you, Mr. Templar. But since you were obviously going to dine alone, you can take me with you to this Chez Francis place, where I have heard the chef turns himself inside out for you. Afterwards we can come back here and play Bézique for as long or as short a time as you can stand it."

"I'll make myself a little more presentable," said the Saint, "and pick you up at eight."

When he returned he was very presentable indeed, by conventional standards, having changed into a double-breasted dinner jacket of impeccably inconspicuous style and blackness, and she looked him over with visible surprise.

"Don't think I'm overdoing it," he said. "This just happens to be the most anonymous costume I know, in a place like this, for stick-ups and such jobs. With an old nylon stocking over the head, it gives nobody anything worth a damn to describe."

"You needn't have told me that," she retorted. "You almost had me believing that there could be some basis for the legend of the gentleman crook."

Otherwise they spent quite a civilized and sometimes even amusing two and a half hours, and nothing so crude as crime was mentioned again even when the

Saint returned her to her sitting-room, played one hand of Bézique with her, and then asked with deliberate expressionlessness if he might call it a night.

"I shall be up for a long time yet," she said flatly. "Probably playing Patience, since you won't finish this game."

Simon took shameless advantage of this when he returned to his own room sometime after midnight and found the unfriendly inspector of the *Police Judiciaire* already ensconced proprietorially in the most comfortable armchair, and polluting the atmosphere with a cigar which some countries would have classified as a secret weapon.

"*Alors,* Monsieur Templar. Let us continue. There is a hold-up reported from Cap d'Antibes. The man is tall, slender but well-built, his features disguised with a stocking, but wearing a *smoking* like yourself—"

"And like a few thousand other dopes who've settled for the idea that women must change their styles every season, but men have now achieved the ultimate costume which they must expect to wear from here to eternity, or until civilization comes to its glorious radioactive end."

"I am not here to discuss the philosophy of clothing," said the inspector. "I would like to finish this business and go to bed."

He was a small dark man with beady eyes and an impatient manner, as if he was perpetually exasperated by people who gratuitously wasted his time by pretending to be innocent.

"I understand your eagerness," said the Saint mildly. "But isn't it stretching things a bit for you to be waiting here even before I get home from this alleged caper?"

"That is very easy to explain. Your victims would not have waited two seconds to report the robbery. The *gendarmerie* at Cap d'Antibes immediately notified me, as is their duty. And electricity travels on telephone wires much faster than you could drive here, especially at this time of the season. While I only had three blocks to walk."

"Okay," said the Saint. "I'll try to finish this even faster. If you'll permit me . . ."

He picked up the telephone and asked for Mrs. Noversham's suite by number. She answered so promptly that she might have been waiting for the call.

"This is Simon Templar," he said. "Would you be amused to hear that I've already got a policeman in my room accusing me of a stick-up out at Cap d'Antibes?"

"Does he have any evidence?"

"None that I know of. But it's the same character who gave me such a bad time this morning. I think he's just decided to blame me for everything that happens

around here, on general principles."

"How ridiculous," she said. "Have you told him that you only left me a few minutes ago, after playing Bézique with me all evening?"

"I was wondering if you'd mind telling him yourself."

She arrived in a few minutes, an overwhelming figure in her war-paint and jangling jewels, and gave Simon an alibi that was a classic of unblushing perjury, even adorning it with details of some of the hands they had played and waving a piece of paper which she said carried the complete scores for the session. In addition, her phraseology left no doubt of her majestic contempt for the intelligence of the police, and of one policeman in particular.

"Alors, mon vieux," the Saint said to him finally. "You were anxious to get home, I believe. What else is keeping you?"

The inspector stood up, looking somewhat crushed.

"It is only my job," he mumbled. *"Je m'excuse—"*

"Je vous en prie," said the Saint, with exaggerated courtesy, accompanying him to the small vestibule. *"Et dormez bien."*

He closed the outer door and returned to the room where Bertha Noversham still stood looking somewhat Wagnerian.

"I don't know how I should thank you," he began, and she cut him off unceremoniously.

"Don't bother. Just hand over those jewels of Natalie's. I think I can get as good a price for them as you can, and you'll get your share eventually, but I'll do the divvying."

He stared at her frozenly.

"It was nice of you to help me out," he said, "but I didn't think you were planning to make a career of it."

"I can scarcely believe that you're so naïve, Mr. Templar. I'm sure I don't look like a starry-eyed ingénue who'd do something like this for love. I didn't even do it for love for Danny Tench."

"You mean—the man who—"

"My husband. Legally, too, though I never used his name—it sounded too frightfully common."

"But he had *your* jewels on him when he fell," said the Saint slowly. "No, wait a second—I get it. After the yacht job at Ajaccio, and the Métropole at Monte Carlo before that, and God knows how many others before those two, it would have begun to look suspicious if you were always around but never got robbed yourself."

She nodded.

"It's pretty easy for a gabby middle-aged frump like me to make friends with a lot of stupid women, and in no time at all we're comparing jewels and telling each other where we hid them. Danny couldn't have done half as well without me, and he was the first to admit it. But when he slipped last night—and it would

never have happened if he hadn't had that clever idea of planting something in your room—I made up my mind I still wasn't going to give up on Natalie's diamonds, and you were the man to swipe them for me."

"So you actually did talk her into distrusting me."

"And I had to be pretty clever about it, too. And it was even more of a job to set up that date with Bernie Kovar. But she really is quite a babe in the woods, if that does anything for your ego. I never set eyes on her before I found her on the Blue Train a few weeks ago, of course . . . And now," Mrs. Noversham said coldly, "are you going to hand over those sparklers, or shall I have to tell that police inspector what you did to force me to back up your story?"

Simon turned rather sadly towards the little vestibule, at the inevitably identical instant when the inspector made his return entrance from it, on the inevitably unmistakable cue.

He was followed by two *agents* in uniform, one with a notebook and one carrying a small tape recorder, and both of them trying not to look as if they had strayed out of the *Tales of Hoffman.*

Without any need to speak, they all watched Mrs. Noversham's face whiten and sag under the crust of make-up which suddenly did not seem to fit any more.

"Now don't jump to any conclusions," she said at last, with a desperate attempt to keep the old brassy dominance in her voice. "If you had anyone listening in when he phoned me, you know that I asked if you had any evidence, and he said no, it was only suspicion. So I thought that if I pretended to give him an alibi, and made him believe I was as big a crook as he is, I'd get a confession out of him that you could use. And he was just ready for it when you busted in and spoiled it all. But you can't guillotine me for trying to help you do the job the taxpayers pay you for. If you even had the gumption to search him right now, he's probably still got those jewels on him—"

"I'm sorry, Bertha," Simon said. "But there never was any hold-up. I only asked the inspector to act as if there had been one, and I promised him that *you* would do the confessing. He took quite a lot of convincing, and I hate to think what he'd've done if you'd let me down."

Mrs. Noversham had one succinct response to that, and she squeezed it through her teeth with all the venom of the professional.

"Stool pigeon!"

"It was rather against my principles," said the Saint, and he meant it. "In some ways I'd rather have stolen your jewels and called it quits. But you and Dannyboy started the routine by trying to get me in trouble, and then I

wanted to get the record straight for Natalie."

The little inspector cleared his throat irritably.

"*Madame,* this not a performance at the *Comédie Française.* You understand that you will have to accompany us?"

"Only too well, Alphonse," said Bertha Noversham very insultingly.

She started regally towards the door; but as the two *agents* nervously made way for her she turned back.

"Mr. Templar," she said almost humbly, "*why?*"

"To use a phrase of your own," said the Saint, "you shouldn't have thrown Natalie to the wolves —or wolf. You made her out to be such an outrageous all-time phony that after I got over the first shock I started to think that if any woman could be such a colossal barefaced liar, so could any other. But I'd never caught Natalie in the smallest dishonesty, myself, whereas I always knew that there's no such person as the Duke of Camford. And once the question of credibility had come up, there was no doubt about which of you had done the hottest job of selling me the idea of robbing the other. . . . There are several morals in this, Bertha, but I'd say the best one is that before you start beating a path to the door of a man who makes better mousetraps, you should be sure that you're not a mouse."

"*Madame,*" said the inspector impatiently, "one cannot wait for you all night."

However, he had the grace to pause, albeit restively, before following his cohorts and their evidence and his prize.

"I am indebted for your assistance, *Monsieur le Saint,* and if perhaps some day I can—"

"I knew you'd think of that, Alphonse," Simon took him up cheerily; and the little man winced. "Mrs. Sheridan may be home already, or she should be at any moment, and I'm sure you won't mind waiting to vouch for the true story of the last twenty-four hours. There'll be so many other nights when you can go to bed early, and sleep like a cherub, once you know I've got something better to do than climb in and out of windows, at my age."

the dorrington inheritance

by . . . August Derleth

The father had obviously cheated his partners when he bought them out. Now the son was threatened.

IT WAS on a wild winter night of the seventh year I shared with my companion, Solar Pons, at his quarters, 7B Praed Street, that there came to his attention a singular matter which was to have a more profound and lasting effect on me than on him. For to Pons the affair of the Dorrington inheritance was but another in a long sequence of challenging problems, while to me—ah, but that is a different matter, extraneous to this account, which is primarily concerned with the unique talents of the private enquiry agent who had done me the honor of suggesting that I share his rooms.

Pons had been more than usually restless that night. Nights of storm and weather tended to stir him, as if the wind's rune along Praed Street, and the occasional patter of rain or whisper of snow at the panes were a path to the memory of more exciting times. He was pacing to and fro, filling the room with the fumes of the strong shag he smoked, when there was a pull at the bell below. Pons paused and turned toward the door. In a few moments the outer door could be heard opening

Solar Pons was created, to quote Anthony Boucher, to fill "the abhorrent vacuum in the life of London" that followed Sherlock Holmes' decision to retire. First appearing in print in 1929, Derleth's pastiches built around the character of the unusual investigator have won wide acclaim.

and closing, and a step fell upon the stair.

"Our good landlady is coming up with a message," said Pons.

A tap on the door was followed by Mrs. Johnson's troubled face looking in at us. She held an envelope in her hand.

"I do hope this won't take you out on such a night as this, Mr. Pons," she said.

"Thank you, Mrs. Johnson. I am always at the service of those who call upon me. We shall see."

As she withdrew, he tore open the envelope and took a short letter from it. He read it with sparkling eyes and, finishing, tossed it to me.

"We are about to have a visitor," he said cheerily, rubbing his hands together in anticipation.

The letter was simplicity itself, straightforward and direct.

"Dear Mr. Pons,

"I beg you to see me at half after eight tonight. My father refuses to take steps for his own protection, as if he feared some scandal; I am convinced that unless such steps are taken, his life will be forfeit to the scoundrels who are hounding him, but, fortunately, have so far failed of accomplishing their goal.

I am, sir, yours sincerely,
Constance Dorrington."

"What do you make of it, Parker?" asked Pons, as I lowered the letter.

"Well, it is certainly admirably clear," I ventured. "Written by a lady of purpose."

"And quality, for the stationery is expensive."

"Determined."

"Not to be crossed without intelligence."

"Refined."

"Of such sensibilities as one would like to see in all women, true—and which one finds, alas! too seldom. She writes a fine, flowing hand, but with a certain restraint; she has an eye to the proper balance—see how well she has arranged her letter on the paper!—and she promises us an intriguing little puzzle on which to sharpen our wits."

"Her father's life threatened," I murmured.

"Ah, more than that, I fancy. There is more here than Miss Dorrington intended to meet the eye. 'As if he feared some scandal.' *Dorrington.* Does not that name ring a familiar chord?"

"None whatsoever."

Pons turned to his voluminous notebooks as I spoke, and paged rapidly through them, pausing now and then with the ghost of a smile at his thin lips, or the faintest twinkle in his keen gray eyes as memory of some success was jogged by the passing pages. Finally he came to rest.

"Ah, here we are. 'Dorrington, Alexander — Discovered and long part owner of the Premier Diamond Mine, Kimberly. Owner

of the Maracot Diamond.' And so on. He had one son, Amos T., presumably our client's father. He belonged to a great many clubs and societies, and died only three years ago. Evidently Amos T. was his only heir." He closed the book and looked calculatingly at me. "I thought I knew that name. The Maracot takes rank with the Koh-inoor and the Hope diamonds for size and value. Where there is treasure, Parker, there is also likely to be tribulation." He paused again and cocked his head alertly toward the windows. "Was that not the sound of a cab? I daresay our client is at the door."

The ringing of our bell followed hard upon his words.

"Rung with decision and determination," murmured Pons. "There is no hesitation there."

Within a few moments, Mrs. Johnson showed into the room a surprisingly beautiful young woman in her early twenties. Though she wore a long cape which came almost to her trim ankles and which accentuated her height, she had no covering on her head, despite the raw weather, and her thick, lustrous chestnut brown hair, snow-flecked and touched with raindrops, gleamed and shone in the light of the room. Her eyes seemed both green and blue; her mouth was small in appearance, but full; her cheek-bones were high; and her eyebrows had the look of being brushed up, untouched by any shaping instrument, which gave her face the challenging and breathtaking beauty of an aroused madonna's.

She came straight toward Pons and extended one long slender arm.

"Mr. Pons, it is good of you to see me. I am Constance Dorrington. I hope you'll forgive my precipitate coming, but I could withstand my impulse no longer."

"I trust I shall always be at home to a beautiful lady," said Pons, with unaccustomed gallantry. Then, turning to indicate me, he added, "This is my companion and friend, Dr. Lyndon Parker, who—I see by that look of soft and yielding awe—would like even more to be at your service."

She flashed him a charming glance of gentle reproach for thus having brought a touch of color to my own cheeks as well as to hers.

"Pray sit down, Miss Dorrington. Dr. Parker, I see, is already waiting on your cape."

The removal of our client's cape disclosed a figure which in every way complemented the beauty of her features. Moreover, she was modestly and inexpensively dressed, and she wore little jewelry, though, to tell the truth, nothing more could have enhanced her appearance. She wore a diamond on her engagement finger.

She sat down in Pons' favorite chair, and, while he stood with

one elbow on the crowded mantel, listening, she began with unusual directness to tell us her story.

"My father, as you may know, is the only son of the late Alexander Dorrington, who was for many years in the diamond mines of South Africa. He left my father a considerable inheritance, but I have begun to believe that my father's inheritance includes something more sinister than the pecuniary rewards of diamond mining. My father has admitted to us that there was some question about the fairness of the arrangement by which grandfather bought out his partners. To put it as plainly as possible, Mr. Pons, I'm afraid my grandfather cheated his partners badly. These gentlemen, who were named Bartholdi and Convers, did make some ineffective protest at that time, but my grandfather appears to have had the law—such as it was—on his side. If this is indeed the case, I suggested to my father that he make restitution to the families of his father's partners—Mr. Convers is dead, but Mr. Bartholdi still lives in Kensington—but he will not hear of it."

"You made the suggestion because his life had been threatened?" Pons put in.

"Not alone that, Mr. Pons. Because it seemed to me only honest. I had not learned of the matter before."

She opened a small bag she carried and removed three envelopes from it. These she gave to Pons, explaining that they were the warnings her father had received. I stepped to Pons' side and peered over his shoulder.

All had been posted in Kensington. Each was addressed to our client's father by means of a sequence of letters cut from newspapers, crudely pasted together, and the letters enclosed were similarly made. The first of them had been sent seven weeks previously. It read simply:

"Your days are numbered."

The second, posted three weeks later, read:

"Grown fat on stolen diamonds! How fat was B. when he died—a pauper? Put your affairs in order."

The third, posted but a week ago, was in similar vein:

"Count your days. The Old Man failed honor and justice. We will not fail again."

Pons read these with tight lips and narrowed eyes. He made no comment, however, other than to signal our client to continue her story.

"When father received the first of these warnings, he was with us."

Pons interrupted her. "You speak of 'us,' Miss Dorrington. You have neither brother nor sister, and your mother is dead."

"Forgive me. My fiancé, Count Carlo de Sepulveda, was with us at the time. Being Spanish, he is

excitable, and he wanted my father to summon the police at once. Father was so reluctant to even consider doing so, that my fiancé was astonished. Then father admitted that grandfather's enemies might indeed still hope to gain a part of his inheritance, and told us about the advantage grandfather had taken of his less educated partners. I suggested at that time that restitution might be made, but both father and my fiancé agreed that the method of approach selected by these people merited no such consideration, and I suppose, in a way, they were right, for I'm sure father would have listened to any straightforward plea. Besides, we had no way of knowing whether the warnings came from Convers' heirs or from Bartholdi—or from someone close to them who might have learned about the affair from either of them.

"When the second letter arrived, father guessed that Bartholdi or some close associate of Bartholdi, was behind it. He believes that the reference to 'B.' was meant to misguide him, for of course, it is Mr. Convers who is dead, and it is true that Mr. Convers died in unhappy circumstances. Exactly ten days after this note was received, the first attempt was made on my father's life. He narrowly escaped being shot or bludgeoned to death that evening when he was accosted and held up by two masked men carrying weapons. Only the fortunate arrival of a policeman prevented the success of the ruffians, who had begun to beat father, though he had offered them his wallet and watch. He didn't connect them with the warnings at that time, even though it appeared to be deliberate. It was not until he received the third warning, with its reference to not failing 'again' that he realized an attempt had been made. Even then he would not communicate with the police. Now that the third letter has come, I have grown increasingly fearful for his life, and I simply can no longer sit idly by waiting and wondering how they will strike next time.

"I've come here in a compromise between my wish and my father's. You are not the police, Mr. Pons, and I would like you to prevent anything happening to my father. I have thought that if some intermediary could approach Mr. Bartholdi—or the heirs of Mr. Convers—and suggest that restitution for any wrong might be made without the necessity of resorting to violence, my father could be persuaded to agree. I have Mr. Bartholdi's address here, but I do not know Mr. Convers' heirs."

Pons hesitated a moment before replying. "I do not usually act as such an intermediary, Miss Dorrington, but there are points about your little problem that interest me."

"You will act for us, then, Mr. Pons?"

"Say rather, I will act for you, Miss Dorrington. I have no commission from your father. I shall, however, have to meet him. Perhaps tomorrow evening might be convenient?"

"Certainly, Mr. Pons. Perhaps you and Dr. Parker could come to dinner."

Pons looked over at me, his eyes twinkling. "Dr. Parker would be delighted. As for me—we shall see."

"Seven o'clock then, Mr. Pons."

"Dr. Parker will see you to your cab."

I escorted Miss Dorrington to her cab with pleasure, and returned to find Pons seated in the chair she had just vacated. His long legs were stretched out before him, and his chin was sunk to his chest, his lips were pursed, his eyes closed, and the fingers of one hand played with the lobe of an ear. He did not make any sign at my return, and did not, in fact, speak, until some time had elapsed.

"If you had a moment, Parker," he said then, "to stray from your admiration for the form and features of our client, did you observe anything of unusual moment about her story?"

I admitted I did not.

"It does not strike you as highly ingenuous?"

I laughed, I fear, somewhat brittlely. "Not half so much as many of the problems you have taken in hand."

"She is a courageous young lady. Engaged to a foreigner, too, by the sound of it. We would be happier with more of her kind at home."

"Married to a fishmonger, no doubt, so long as he is an Englishman."

Pons glanced at me with a droll raising of his eyebrows. "Or a doctor—who knows?" he said. "Let us just have a look at the *Peerage*."

I gave him the book and waited.

" 'Sepulveda,' " he murmured presently. "Certainly an old Spanish family, with or without the 'di.' But somewhat more at home in the New World than in the old during the last century or two. The Sepulvedas were among the founding families of Spanish California, and there are still streets, settlements, and byways in California cities named in their honor. The Spanish line appears to have all but vanished."

"An American then."

"I know of no such anomaly as a titled American. He is surely not that. Either he belongs to the last remnants of the Spanish line or he is an American who affects the title to which he has a right when abroad. But his name is less familiar than that other—Bartholdi."

"Was there not a German government officer of that name?"

"Indeed there was, Parker. The name, however, is Swiss."

"Will you call on him?"

"I should be inclined to delay that a little. I ought first to wait upon our client's father. I submit that I would put myself in an incongruous position indeed were I to make an offer I could not subsequently support." He shook his head. "Just the same, I may stroll about the vicinity of the address Miss Dorrington left with me. In the meantime, let us look once more at those little missives sent to Mr. Dorrington."

I handed these to him, and replaced the *Peerage*.

"What do you make of these, Parker?"

"Is there anything to be made of them but what is so clearly set forth?"

"Yes, there are certain points of interest. Do they not seem curiously vague to you, Parker?"

"No more so than many of which I have read."

"Ah, in the fiction of detection, no doubt. But this, I remind you, is life."

"Oh, come, Pons, they are simple enough in their meaning."

"I regret to say I do not find them so. The first one, for instance, makes no mention whatsoever of the reason why Mr. Dorrington's days should be numbered. If he were willing to make restitution for his father's sins, there is not even a hint that the business of the sale of the diamond mine is the *raison d'etre* for the warning. I submit that this is a strange approach indeed."

"It was meant to frighten Dorrington into a receptive frame of mind."

"One would have thought his father's old associates could have guessed that something of the old man's ruggedness might come down to his son."

"The second warning is indicative enough. 'Stolen diamonds.' Could you ask for more?"

"Indeed I could. Is it not singularly odd that Mr. Dorrington should be given time to put his affairs in order?"

"Clearly that is an invitation to make restitution."

"You think so?"

"I am positive of it."

"Pray remember that the late Ambrose Bierce held that to be positive meant to be a fool at the top of one's voice." He shook his head. "To whom, then, ought he to make restitution? There is no name signed to it. There is nothing to show whether it is Bartholdi or Convers' heirs who are after him. I submit that the invitation is not nearly as simple as you make it out to be, my dear friend."

"And the third?" I asked.

"In this matter the third is even more explicit. The mention of 'B' in the second note might well have been intentionally misleading . . ."

"It could not have been anything else."

"On the contrary," retorted Pons, "it could have been a simple error. The mention of the 'Old Man,' the name by which the senior Dorrington was known among his crews in Kimberly, suggests a wider knowledge of the possible motive for this persecution of our client's father. Does it not strike you as curious, indeed, that 'honor and justice' can be served only by Dorrington's death?"

"However strange it may seem, that is precisely what the warning does suggest."

"Gently, Parker, gently," said Pons. "I agree. You need not raise your voice to make your point. However, there are other points. The grammar is flawless; Bartholdi, however, was referred to as one of Dorrington's 'less educated partners.' This suggests nothing to you?"

"Nothing but the elementary—that it is not Bartholdi at all who is behind this, but one of Convers' heirs."

"That is surely the most obvious conclusion," agreed Pons soberly. "I am not quite happy with it at this stage, however. Let us sleep on it. Perhaps tomorrow will bring us new insight."

I did not see Pons again until noon of the next day, for he was up and about long before I rose. He came in to find me at a frugal lunch. His eyes were dancing, and he had about him an air that suggested an ill-kept secret.

"Ah, you have seen Bartholdi," I ventured.

"Capital, capital, my dear Parker!" he exclaimed. "I have seen him. I have even talked with him. I found him an amiable old fellow of some eighty years, by no means in straitened circumstances, and with a very wide circle of friends among the pigeons of Kensington—he feeds them regularly."

"Such a harmless guise may equally well conceal a black heart."

"I have known it to do so. Mr. Adrian Convers, however, whom I also looked up, is a man of quite another stamp. Not yet sixty, very vigorous, extremely close-mouthed and suspicious. He has a small business where he sells cigars, newspapers, and magazines. He would seem to me a bad man to cross."

"Ah, that little deduction of my own!" I exclaimed. "I find it extremely significant to learn that Mr. Adrian Convers maintained a newspaper stand. How simple it must be for him to have access to the printed letters he would need for the warnings posted to Mr. Dorrington! Or have you overlooked that point?"

"Not at all. Indeed, you will be happy to know that I had the opportunity to rummage through a stack of papers under his counter

while he was otherwise engaged. I found these."

He produced from the place on the mantel where he had put them, three newspaper pages and put them before me. I saw at a glance that letters and words had been carefully cut out of them.

"Aha!" I cried with a glance, I fear, of undoubted triumph.

"It would indeed seem to be suggestive," admitted Pons.

"'Suggestive'!" I cried. "I should say it is the strongest possible circumstantial evidence—particularly as the dates seem to correspond on these papers with the approximate time of the mailing of at least one of the letters to Mr. Dorrington."

"I had given the matter some thought," replied Pons. "Yet I remain troubled about one or two little details, and I should be loath to charge Convers with the authorship of this singular persecution until I am settled in mind about him. For one thing, Bartholdi and Convers are in touch with each other, and Bartholdi has access to Convers' counter and newspapers. Access, in fact, is rather public. For another thing, the attack on our client's father bespeaks the hiring of toffs."

"Then it could be either Convers or Bartholdi!"

"I fear it could. Yet the studied crudeness of the method does not ring true."

"You have not said they were literate men."

"They are not. I submit, however, that the method stands in odd contrast to the proper grammar of the letters."

"They may have employed someone to prepare the letters."

"Quite true," agreed Pons. "But it is also eminently possible that there is a group of them working toward a common end. There are other Convers heirs."

"Have you tracked any of them down?"

Pons shook his head. "At the moment, I am not inclined to do so. I should like first to have a talk with Mr. Dorrington. We shall look forward to dinner."

We were not destined to share dinner with our client and her father that evening, however. In mid-afternoon Miss Dorrington sent frantic word that her father had been run down and gravely injured; moreover, her fiancé had just barely escaped a similar fate. Both men had been pushed into the path of a speeding car, and Count di Sepulveda had also been bludgeoned. Miss Dorrington was close to hysteria, and Pons lost no time setting out for the Park Lane home of our client.

Miss Dorrington herself met us at the door. It was patent that she had been weeping, though she was now composed.

"Both father and Carlo are in bed. Carlo is not too badly injured—he was struck on the head by what must have been a sandbag,

but he managed to avoid the car, which ran down my father. Both were knocked down, and they failed to get the number of the car. He remembers only that it was a large black Daimler, and that two swarthy men were driving it."

"Where did the attack take place, Miss Dorrington?"

"At the Embankment Gardens, near the Charing Cross tube station. My father had made a visit to his solicitor, who is ill at his home. Carlo was with him. As the two of them crossed the street, someone who must have been following them pushed them into the path of a car that came around the corner and raced down the street. Carlo was agile enough to twist away from the car before he fell, but my father fell in its path. But you'll want to talk to Carlo."

"If he can talk comfortably."

Count di Sepulveda lay in a comfortable double bed at the head of the stairs. He was a pleasant, open-faced young man, not without traces of a certain elegance in his manner, even in his prone position. His head was bandaged over packing behind his right ear. At our entrance, his brown eyes widened in surprise.

"You didn't tell me you had visitors, Constance," he said in mild reproof.

"This is Mr. Solar Pons, Carlo —Dr. Parker is with him. Mr. Pons has come at my request to look into the persecution to which father has been subjected."

"I'm glad to hear it," he said heartily. "We urged him to go to the police weeks ago, Mr. Pons."

"Miss Dorrington has given me most of the facts," said Pons. "Can you tell us more? Where, for instance, was your assailant concealed?"

"I didn't see him—or them, Mr. Pons. But an appreciable amount of shrubbery grows at the Embankment Gardens, and I suppose, having followed us, he had hidden himself there, and run out after us as soon as he saw his confederates' car approaching. There were two men in the car; both seemed to me quite dark, almost foreign-looking. I had the impression from the brief glimpse of them Mr. Dorrington had that he recognized them."

"Ah," murmured Pons. "Yet they seemed to you foreigners?"

"Either that, or men long exposed to sun."

"You yourself were struck with a sandbag?"

"I took it to be that."

"Yet you managed to prevent being flung after Mr. Dorrington?"

"Yes, Mr. Pons. I twisted to one side, since I had been aware of the car's approach. I don't think Mr. Dorrington saw it coming until he was pushed. I lost consciousness as I fell."

Pons' keen gaze drifted from the bed and its occupant to look

at the appointments of the room. He bent casually and picked up a pair of highly polished shoes, now slightly scuffed.

"Your shoes, Count Sepulveda?"

"Yes, Mr. Pons."

"They certainly retain a high degree of polish."

"I stop only at the best hotels, Mr. Pons," answered Miss Dorrington's fiancé, with a mild trace of hauteur.

Pons replaced the shoes and went on. "Was there no other traffic at the hour of the accident? Half after three, I believe, was the time."

"That is correct, Mr. Pons. As bad luck would have it, there was very little traffic at that time. Just the same, the car evidently did not dare to come back and make sure of our condition. Pedestrians had seen the accident, apparently, though no one has come forward to offer information."

"Did you happen to see any pedestrians other than yourselves as you started to cross the street?"

"No, sir, I can't say that I did. One doesn't think of those things —one tends to one's own affairs, not so?"

Pons turned to our client. "Perhaps Dr. Parker might have a glimpse of Mr. Dorrington?"

"By all means," agreed Miss Dorrington. "Dr. Buell has left strict instructions that he is not to be disturbed, but we can go quietly and need not wake him."

Mr. Dorrington lay just across the hall, likewise in a large double bed. There was a nurse in attendance. Acting on a sign from Pons, I stepped up and made a cursory examination of the old man who lay there. He was a stocky, muscular man, just short of being corpulent. Our client watched with some apprehension, and the nurse favored us with a coldly disapproving stare. The patient was still unconscious, but his breathing was regular, and his pulse only a trifle fast.

In the hall, afterwards, I said, "His condition is grave, but he has a good chance."

"That is just what Dr. Buell said," replied Miss Dorrington.

We descended the stairs. All the way down Pons was extremely thoughtful and very silent. At the foot of the steps he took hold of Miss Dorrington's arm firmly but persuasively and drew her close to him.

"I am sure you are very fond of both your father and your fiancé, Miss Dorrington," he said in a lowered voice.

"Of course," she replied, mystified.

"I fear I must tell you I expect a final attempt to be made on your father's life tonight."

"Here—in his own house!" She was incredulous.

"In his own room," agreed Pons. "I took the opportunity to look out the window. The room

is relatively easy of access from outside."

"Mr. Pons, you must be joking."

"I assure you, I have never been more serious. Count Sepulveda himself suggested as much when he said he thought your father had recognized the men in the car which ran him down. If they, too, felt that he did, they have no alternative but to silence him before he can speak."

"Then I will notify the police at once."

"Stay, not so fast," cautioned Pons. "The police have been known to bungle. Let me suggest that, unknown to anyone, Dr. Parker and I conceal ourselves in the room where your father lies, and spend the night on guard beside him."

"Mr. Pons, I could not ask you . . ."

"Miss Dorrington, you have retained me to save your father's life. I mean to do so by every means at my disposal. I fancy we may be able not only to save his life but also to net the culprit who is the author of this scheme."

"The night nurse must know . . ."

Pons looked at his watch. "When is she due?"

"At eight."

"Adjure her silence, Miss Dorrington."

"Certainly, Mr. Pons."

"Very well. We shall return here at eight—unknown to anyone, mind! Even your father—should he return to consciousness—is not to be told. As long as no announcement of his death has been made, your father is in very grave danger."

Our client was still hesitant and troubled, but finally she acquiesced. "Very well, Mr. Pons, if that is your wish."

As we left the house, I turned on Pons.

"Aren't you subjecting Miss Dorrington to unnecessary worry?" I demanded indignantly.

"I think not."

"How do you deduce that a final attempt will be made on Dorrington?"

"Any other attempt will be too late," said Pons. "You heard Sepulveda say that Dorrington appeared to have recognized the men in the car. Now then—exercise your ingenuity—is it Bartholdi or the Convers' heirs behind this persecution?"

I ignored his challenge. "And what, pray tell," I went on, still indignant, "was the point of inquiring about Count Sepulveda's shoes?"

"Ah, forgive me, Parker—I fear I try you. I was interested only in the excellence of their polish, which did not extend to beneath the instep."

"I myself have never worn a pair better polished," I said.

"Ah, you have never stayed at Claridge's, Parker," answered Pons with a little smile.

"And now?" I asked.

"We shall take the precaution of taking along some weapons—you may have the revolver, Parker. I will content myself with my leaded stick. Unless I am much mistaken, we shall have the opportunity of bringing this matter to a successful conclusion before the night is done."

Shortly after eight o'clock, Pons and I were concealed in Amos Dorrington's room. The patient was still unconscious, and the night nurse was rather relieved than not at the presence of a doctor in the room, since it lightened her task, however mystified she was that we were there. The room was quiet, but for some time, there was considerable movement in the room across the hall; servants and—I had no doubt—our client herself, came and went at the wish of the patient, who would be up and about in a day or two, as soon as he was inclined to be, since the nature of his wound did not necessitate our client's fiancé's staying in bed.

The night wore on. Pons had set me to watch the windows, but to stay out of line with them, so that I might not be seen against the faint light in the room. He himself had taken his stand behind the door. As the night deepened, Pons sent the nurse on one aimless errand after another—quite as if he actually wished her out of the room—until I became so indignant that I restrained my protests only with the greatest difficulty.

The room was lit only by a small bedside lamp, which threw a glow over the patient where he lay but cast only the faintest illumination about the rest of the room. There was now no sound from outside, and gradually the house itself quieted down in sleep.

Half an hour past midnight, Pons urged the nurse to go below stairs to brew us some hot tea; he promised that I would watch over the patient. She was relieved to escape the sick room for that little time, and Pons, I felt sure, was relieved at her going, since her presence obviously hampered him.

She had hardly gone, however, when there was a quick rustling sound outside the door. I turned expectantly. The door opened, slowly at first, then swiftly, and closed again as someone slipped into the room. Almost at once I was aware of the odor of chloroform as a dark figure moved quickly toward the bed, his intention patent.

Before I could cry out a warning, Pons had crept up behind him. Just as the intruder bent above the patient, Pons raised his leaded stick and struck him down. He crumpled to the floor without a murmur.

"Arouse Miss Dorrington now, Parker," said Pons. "I'll stop up that chloroform."

I hastened out.

When I came back with our client, even more attractive in her negligee and gown than before, Pons stood before the door. He caught hold of Miss Dorrington's hands and looked earnestly into her startled face.

"My dear lady, if you could free your father from the danger which hangs over him with but one diamond," he said, "would you do so?"

"Indeed I would!" she cried passionately.

Pons turned his hand so that Miss Dorrington's left hand rested lightly on his. He touched the diamond on her finger.

"This is the stone, Miss Dorrington. Return it."

So saying, he threw open the door of Amos Dorrington's room and turned up the light. There, still where he had fallen, lay Count Carlo de Sepulveda.

"I fear I have had to add to the blow he so calculatingly bestowed upon himself," said Pons.

Our client cried out and ran over to him. She came to her knees beside his still form.

"Mr. Pons, you have killed him!"

"I think not."

Then she grew aware of the odor. "Chloroform!" she exclaimed. She shot a glance at Pons, her eyes wide with apprehension. "Oh, Mr. Pons—you cannot mean . . . ?"

Pons nodded gravely. "I do, Miss Dorrington. The author of all your troubles and your father's persecution is none other than your fiancé—who is as bogus a count as I have ever had the misfortune to encounter. No one staying at the best hotels could fail to have his footwear below the instep as highly polished as his shoetops.

"There would seem to have been some slight misunderstanding in this little problem, Miss Dorrington. It was by design, but no one coming to your difficulty with an open mind could fail to be aware of it. There was only *one* diamond that was important —that is the stone you are at this moment removing from your finger—since it provided the motive for your fiancé's deeds. The motive was not in seeking to gain part of your father's inheritance, but all your own."

Later, as we stood in the street waiting for a cab, Pons could not forego the chance of scoring over me.

"My dear fellow, the entire matter was as plain as a pikestaff. The crudely done but grammatical warnings were a lesson in developing the power of observation. The first of them was nothing less than a feint; it dredged up more than the rumor which had inspired it. But Sepulveda did not listen closely; in his second note he made the error of referring to Bartholdi as the other deceased member of the trio who once

owned the Dorrington mines. His attempt to implicate Mr. Adrian Convers by 'planting' the cut-out papers under his counter was merely fatuous, for neither the Convers heirs nor Bartholdi had any valid reason for waiting so long after Alexander Dorrington's death to press any claim they felt they had.

"In the third warning Sepulveda gives the show away by referring to the elder Dorrington as the 'Old Man,' which could have been known only to Dorrington's associates or to someone who had sat at the family councils. If we eliminate the former associates and their heirs, only Sepulveda is left with motive and opportunity, however improbable he might seem as the likely suspect. Who else but he sat at those councils?

"And who but he knew of Dorrington's plan to visit his solicitor at his home? Only Sepulveda could have arranged for his accomplices to be ready for Sepulveda's pushing Dorrington ahead of the car, after which he sandbagged himself. Doubtless his accomplices had returned quickly enough to mix with the gathering crowd and make off with the telltale weapon. Undoubtedly Dorrington was aware of the identity of his attacker—but Sepulveda had not counted on the car's failing to kill him; so he had no choice but to attempt to accomplish Dorrington's death before the old man could talk and name him.

"A plan bounded by folly. Had he succeeded, Sepulveda would have been at the mercy of the toffs he had hired for years to come."

He paused just as a cab came toward the curb.

"By the way, Parker, I submit that even though the bogus Count di Sepulveda has been collared by the police, our client might very well be in need of just that kind of comfort only a solid man of your stamp could offer her."

"At this hour?" I cried.

"The hour is never too late for gallantry, Parker."

"Do you think so?" I asked, I fear, much too eagerly.

"I do indeed," he said gravely, getting into the cab and giving the driver the address of our quarters. He leaned out in the face of my hesitation and added, "Pray give her my compliments on her dispatch in acting against her father's persecutor. I have a feeling we shall see more of the lady."

Once again time proved my astute companion only too correct in his deduction.

the rooking of raffles

by . . . Barry Perowne

Possession of the Ming Tan chessmen meant continued control of the island — an obvious challenge to Raffles.

AGAINST the limpid sky of a London springtime evening, insignia projecting above the doors of great business houses, in a silent street east of St. Paul's, stood out with curious effect. A. J. Raffles and myself, Bunny Manders, had been visiting a friend in his city office. It was seldom that we came to this quarter, and now as we walked, belated, in search of a hansom, we were struck by such pendant insignia as a totem pole denoting a company trading into the Far West, and a gilded centipede which marked a bank trading, on the other hand, into the Far East.

Suddenly Raffles stopped and, pointing upward with his stick, said, "Bunny, where have we seen those elephants before?"

The pachyderms in question, which were of lacquered wood, one ivory in color, the other coral-red, hung side by side above a doorway. Each bore on its back a *howdah* in the shape of a crenellated keep from which flew a carven pennon.

"Chessmen of the Indies," said Raffles. "The elephants stand for our 'Castles' or 'Rooks.' But they

One of the distinctly British personalities who have survived these decades despite our apparent preference for the less gentle methods of mayhem, is that eternally young Raffles, with the wicked gleam in his eye, whom Hornung first introduced us to and Barry Perowne has since continued to write about.

ring some other bell in my memory. What *is* this place?"

We walked forward a few paces, looking up at the lacquered chessmen. They swayed a little, creaking, in the evening airs. Down the long street not a soul was in sight. In the distance, the dome of St. Paul's, soared about by the specks of pigeons, floated in the sky.

The house of the chessmen was old, even a bit askew. It was narrow, six stories in height, with leaded casement windows, the frames and sills of which were of carved teak. Behind the diamond-shaped windowpanes were what looked like closed shutters of iron. Two steps led up to narrow double doors, also of carved teak, with a chessboard inlaid in each upper panel. On the right-hand lower panel was a brass plate, so worn by long polishing that we were obliged to peer closely to read its legend: *Joseph Cavender & Son (The Chess House)—East India Merchants—Ming Tan Concessionaires.*

"Cavender?" I said. "Why, Raffles—you remember! At school! The mystery man—Roy Cavender!"

"Who always," said Raffles, "wore a watch-chain with two miniature elephant Rooks on it. Yes, of course. A form or two ahead of us, and left before us. A prefect. Queer, haunted kind of chap, long, gangling, stoop-shouldered as though he had the weight of the world on him. Aloof, harrassed, miserable johnnie."

"He used to be excused games," I recalled.

"Just so," said Raffles. "He had special coaching in chess, instead. He was so good that he used to be asked to play in the Masters' Common Room, and finally only the Head himself, a terrific chess swell, could give him a game." He offered me his cigarette case as he looked up thoughtfully at the building. "Obviously, we've stumbled on a bit of that chap's family background. Now, I wonder why chess should mean so much to a family of—what do they call themselves? *East India Merchants—Ming Tan Concessionaires—*"

He held a match in cupped hands first to my Sullivan, then to his own. And as the light struck up under the brim of his silk hat, I saw a gray gleam come into his eyes. Abruptly, he flicked the match away.

"Ming Tan!" he said. "I've just thought of somebody who could give us information. And, by Jove, here comes a hansom!"

The horse's hooves clip-clopped hollowly in the hush as the hansom came swaying out of a side street and, at Raffles' hail, was reined-in with a jingle of harness.

"Where to, sir?" said the cabbie.

"Clifford's Inn," said A. J. Raffles.

As The Chess House receded behind us into the maze of side streets behind St. Paul's, he told me that the man who had sprung to his mind was a venerable solicitor of the name of Orde Gilmer, who was a member of a Pall Mall Club to which we belonged.

"I'm sure I remember hearing him speak of Ming Tan," he said. "It's an island in the vicinity of Java and Bali. Gilmer's connected with it in some way. I hope we can run him to earth."

In a twilit, stonewalled passage in the ancient confines of Clifford's Inn, we found that the solicitor had sported his oak; the door stood open and Raffles, with a tap on the baize-covered inner door, led the way in. We found Orde Gilmer in the act of helping himself to sherry, and he cocked an eye sidelong at us over his spectacles.

"Raffles and Manders?" he said. "Welcome, my dear fellows. You shall give me an opinion on this wine."

He was a sturdy old boy with the noble white head of a Liszt and a long, clean-shaven, legal upper lip which stretched with gusto as he sampled his sherry.

"Ming Tan?" he said, when Raffles had broached the purpose of our call. "H'm! At school with Roy Cavender, were you? Thought him a bit of a mystery? No doubt, no doubt." He waved us to saddlebag chairs, sank into one himself. "Ever hear of Lyndon Smith?" he asked.

We confessed our ignorance, and the solicitor explained to us that the administration of the independent island of Ming Tan had been vested for a century and more in a dynasty founded by an Englishman called Lyndon Smith.

"Grand old chap he must have been," said Orde Gilmer. "A naturalist and a medical man. He was a widower, and he and a son of his made their home in Ming Tan. They loved the people there and did a great deal for them in medical and other ways. The upshot was, the gay, sweet-natured people of Ming Tan came to love and rely on the Smiths, and they made the old man their leader, with the title of Hanahmi—which in the Tannee language is Prince—with succession vested in his descendants. That's how the dynasty of the Smiths of Ming Tan was founded. Now, where do the Cavenders come into the picture, you ask? Quite so."

He took a sip at his sherry.

"The only trader to call regularly at Ming Tan in those days," he went on, "was one Joe Cavender, master and owner of the barque *Sundown*. Now, old Hanahmi Smith was a chess devotee. The people of the island, in recognition of that, had made him a gift of a set of chessmen carved in Ming Tan in very ancient days. However, though chess is a great game in the Indies, no one on the island, including his own son, could really give him a game. So

it was always a treat to him when Joe Cavender dropped anchor. He could invariably beat Joe. Still, Joe could make him think. The only trouble was, Joe was a hard man, with a gimlet eye to the main chance. He had most of Ming Tan's trade, but he foresaw competition and he was always nagging Hanahmi Smith to grant him an exclusive concession. The old man didn't see it, and he got so tired of Joe's importunities that one day, in a goaded moment, he tried to put a stop to them once and for all by throwing down a challenge."

Orde Gilmer looked at us over his spectacles.

"Mind you, he knew very well he had Joe's number at chess. So he said, 'Now, look here, Joe—the first time you win a chess game from me, I'll grant your concession. And, by heaven, I'll make my Ming Tan chessmen the seal and token of the bargain. The day you win, the concession, and the chessmen as token of it, will become yours and remain yours—until such time as I challenge you to a return game and defeat you. *Should* you win a game, and something happens to either or both of us thereafter, the concession and the chessmen shall remain the property of your descendants until such time as a descendant of mine shall challenge and defeat, in a single game, your family's current best player, when the concession shall be forfeit and the chessmen returned to Ming Tan. Mark you, no challenge from a Smith can ever be refused, and the game shall be played within forty-eight hours of the challenge. If you should win the chessmen from me, they become your responsibility. I or any descendant of mine shall have the right to view them on demand, and failure to produce them shall involve immediate forfeit of the concession. All games resulting from a challenge from a Smith to a Cavender, should it ever come to that, shall be played with the Ming Tan chessmen in the presence of a man-of-law and two witnesses from each side. Now then, Joe, I don't want to hear one more word on the subject. Let's play chess!' "

Raffles said, "The very existence of that building we've just seen—"

"Implies that Joe ultimately won a game?" said Gilmer. "He did. After eight years of trying, eight years of study, with the games between them getting keener and keener, one day he dropped anchor off Ming Tan to find Hanahmi Smith dying. As I've said, Joe was a hard man. It was then or never for him. He lured the old chap into a final, a farewell, game. And Joe won. Hanahmi Smith was a man of his word. He lived long enough to put his signature to an agreement drawn up in the terms I've out-

lined to you. I've seen that agreement. I'm the London solicitor for the Hanahmi Smiths of Ming Tan, and so was my father before me. The Smiths are people of honor. Morally, they regard themselves as bound by the agreement, and that's the position to this day."

"I think," Raffles said slowly, "I begin to understand Roy Cavender's peculiarities at school."

"The Cavenders," said Orde Gilmer, "have lived for a century in dread of challenge and defeat by a Smith at a single game of chess. They've made a great fortune out of their exclusive concession, but the greater their fortune grows, the more jealously they hold on to their concession. Every Cavender boy, generation after generation, is dragooned into chess, whether he has aptitude or not. Fifty years ago, a Cavender schoolboy, poor little tyke, actually drowned himself because of it. I imagine it's much the same for the young Smiths of Ming Tan, because the Cavenders have become leeches on the island economy, their exclusive concession has become, in changed conditions, an incubus. Over the years, the Smiths have sent five challengers —all unsuccessful."

Orde Gilmer reached for the decanter.

"The best player in each Cavender generation," he said, "is elected, regardless of age, chairman of the family concern. The present incumbent is your old school-fellow, Roy. He defeated his father, Norris, who thereupon stepped down from the nominal direction of affairs, though actually he's still the driving force of the firm—a clutch-fisted old fanatic, soured in youth by the need to master a game for which he had no talent. And now," said the solicitor, "I'll give you a bit of current news. There's a new Smith challenger on the sea at this moment, bound for Tillbury." He cocked an eye at us over his spectacles as he refilled our glasses. "You play chess, either of you?"

"Both of us," said Raffles, "though indifferently."

"H'm," mused Gilmer. "You were at school with Roy Cavender but you were in no sense friends of his? Quite so. Well, now—I wonder if you would care to be present at the coming challenge game, as the two witnesses for our side, that of the Smiths?"

"With the utmost pleasure," Raffles said instantly, and I nodded agreement.

"In that case," said the old solicitor, "I'll ask you to raise your glasses to our twenty-one-year-old challenger, Miss Ann Lyndon Smith—otherwise, the Hanahma Kismet, the Princess Kismet, of Ming Tan!"

Naturally, we were eager to know what kind of girl our champion would prove to be. The time passed all too slowly for us. At

long last, there came from Orde Gilmer an invitation to luncheon, to meet his interesting client.

Again we found Gilmer's oak unsported and, as we pushed open the baize-covered inner door to enter the tobacco-y old sunlit room, I saw a slender figure standing framed against the open casement.

She turned at our entrance. She was not tall, and, though she was dressed in the charming mode of any English girl of the day, I saw in the magnolia of her complexion, the subtlety of her dark eyes, and the raven sheen of her hair, intimations of a more exotic clime.

Old Gilmer presented us. Miss Ann, he called her, for she did not use her title outside her island. I was enchanted by the music of her calm, clear voice. And, after a pleasant little luncheon here in Gilmer's chambers, the solicitor consulted his watch.

"Miss Ann," he said, "our appointment with the Cavenders, to convey your challenge and arrange the details, is for three-thirty. We've still an hour or so to spare. I wonder if you would so far indulge an old buffer, himself a humble devotee of the pastime of philosophers, as to grant him the honor of being the first in this country to play chess with you?"

I guessed at once that he was anxious to gauge the strength of her game.

"With pleasure," she said, smiling. "Where is your board?"

He produced it with alacrity, and a shabby old thing it was to set before a princess. Highly expectant, Raffles and I stood to either side, looking on at the game. Her hands were delicate and graceful. She used only her right hand in play, I noticed, the fingers of her left toying meanwhile with an ivory figurine of a turbaned East Indian boy, which conveyed an astonishing effect of liveliness and mischief, dancing at her white throat on a thin gold chain.

She spent little time in reflecting upon her moves, her strategy seeming rather to be dictated by a swift divination. However, very soon I saw that Raffles was frowning at the board as though puzzled, and that Orde Gilmer's legal lip was visibly lengthening. At last, as though forced to it, he ventured a remonstrance.

"Are you *sure,* Miss Ann?" he said. "Are you *sure* you want to make that move? The threat to your King developing here at Bishop seven—"

Her attractive brows knitted as she appraised what even I could now see was a distressing predicament. "Oh, dear!" she said. "How silly of me!"

The solicitor gave us over his spectacles a look of dismal significance.

The tragic truth was, the girl was very poor at chess.

"Miss Ann," said Gilmer heavily, "shall we leave it? A love-

ly spring afternoon—a young girl—let us show you London—"

"But our appointment?" she said. "My challenge?"

"Miss Ann," said Gilmer sadly, "Roy Cavender is a formidable player."

"You think I'm no match for him?" she said. "Oh, I know I'm not good. I have no illusions. But, you see, I was *sent.*"

"What in the world," groaned old Gilmer, "were your family thinking of?"

"It wasn't they who sent me," Ann said, and her fingers went to the tiny, mocking figurine at her throat. "It was the little, forgotten god who gives his name to our island, the little god Ming Tan, who whispered to me, over and over, 'Go! Go to London and make your challenge. Something to all our good will happen there. Go to London, Hanahma Kismet!' " She looked round at us, smiling a little. "So, please," she said, "my dear friends, don't look so unhappy. It isn't *this* game that matters, but the one with the Ming Tan chessmen." She pushed aside the board, and rose. "Isn't it time to go, now?" she said.

I was touched by her faith in her superstition, her feminine intuition, whatever shibboleth it was that had brought her so long a voyage. We all three were. We were reluctant to let her expose herself to the humiliation of defeat at Cavender's hands in a few moves. But she gave us no choice in the matter and, deeply depressed—except for Ann herself—we rode to The Chess House in a four-wheeler.

The Cavenders, father and son, received us in a lofty hall with a chessboard floor, lacquered walls inlaid with a chess *motif,* and huge, intricately wrought Balinese chandeliers. Norris Cavender, the father, was a gaunt, frock-coated man with a massive, bony forehead, a hard mouth, and deeply sunken eyes. His son was even more gangling and bowed than he had been at school; he was haggard, hollow-cheeked, nervous. I noticed that he still wore the elephant Rooks on his watch-chain; and on the father's chain was a similar device, with the addition of what looked like a clock-key. Roy purported to remember Raffles and myself very well, from schooldays, but his brown eyes kept sliding furtively to Ann. Both men were tense, obviously fearful as to the degree of the threat she represented as a possible chess prodigy.

We were conducted up a curving staircase to Roy's office. Here again were a chessboard floor and lacquered, checker-inlaid walls. And here tea was served to us, a pale, fragrant tea in exquisite dove-blue bowls.

"The tea of Ming Tan, Princess," said Norris Cavender, with grim punctilio.

"It's good," said Ann, and, as she sipped from the bowl held in

both slim hands, she gave him above it a contemplative look. "I wonder," she said, "why, in all the years you were head of your firm, Mr. Cavender, you never once came to Ming Tan to see the tea in blossom?"

Roy flushed, and he raised his head and looked at her rather strangely.

But his grim father said, "I've been a busy man all my life, Princess. In these days, in the city here, it's hard for a man to hold his own."

"Hard, too," said Ann, in her calm, clear voice, "for a man to distinguish at all times what is, in justice and humanity—his own?"

The room was utterly silent. Through the diamond-paned windows, I could see in the distance the dome of St. Paul's against the cloudless blue.

"Well, well," said Orde Gilmer abruptly, "we are here for a purpose. First, I would see produced for my client, as is her right on demand, the Ming Tan chessmen."

"Of course," said Norris Cavender, and he rose and stalked into an adjoining room, closing the door behind him.

Gilmer polished his spectacles. Raffles' face was impassive. Roy glanced uneasily at Ann, sipping her tea serenely. In the stillness, the measured ticking of a clock became audible from the adjoining room. At last, the door opened and Norris came back, carrying a gold-hinged ivory board and a large box, also of old ivory, miraculously carved.

He opened the board on the desk. Together he and Roy, neither with hands entirely steady, set out on their appointed squares the chessmen of parchment-hued ivory and those of ivory coral-tinted—the magnificent, tall Kings in the tailed turbans of majesty, each with a ruby diadem; the splendid Queens in their *kains* or *sarongs,* with short shoulder-capes and bared, proud breasts; the sage and stooping holy men, with crooked staves, who stood for Bishops; the mounted Knights in gold-disced armour, with swords upflung; the elephant Rooks, with tight-curled trunks, bearing patiently their gold-tower *howdahs;* the foot-warrior Pawns with *kris* and buckler. And a sun-ray, mote-filled, slanted down from the window upon the chessmen of Ming Tan.

"All my life," said Ann, almost in a whisper, "I've longed to see them—and take them back to the people to whom they belong."

"They belong in this building," said Norris harshly, "in the safe in my room there—until a certain eventuality."

Raffles took out his cigarette-case.

Ann looked at Roy Cavender across the board. "It's you whom I must play and defeat; I understand?" Her fingers went to the figurine at her throat, but her

tone was serene. "Shall we play, then?"

"Play?" Roy looked blank. "Play now?" He seemed bewildered. He glanced uncertainly at his father, then said, "If you wish it, Princess, why—"

"No!" Norris said sharply. "This is too precipitate. Our own man-of-law is not present. Mr. Gilmer, I must remind you of the terms of the agreement—game to follow challenge at *any* time within forty-eight hours. I do sincerely feel—"

"Your son seems discomposed," said Orde Gilmer drily. "You want to give him time to steel himself, is that it?"

"Father," said Roy, "I—"

"Have the goodness," snarled Norris, "to let *me* handle this! Mr. Gilmer, I do sincerely take the view that this is hardly the time— Princess, you can see for yourself—hardly the mood—heightened feelings—our delight at meeting you—"

"Then tomorrow, at this hour?" Ann suggested. "It really won't take long."

"Not long?" said Norris. The thought visibly jolted him. He stared at the girl as though interrogating a sphinx. He looked ill. He cleared his throat hoarsely, and crossed his Rubicon. "So be it," he said. "Tomorrow, then, at this hour, in this office."

Orde Gilmer shook his head in wry amusement as we drove away.

"They sense disaster in your very name, Princess *Kismet!*" he said. "If they only knew! I tell you, four moves—four moves—will be enough to dispel their nightmares. Raffles, Manders, what irony! Ah, Miss Ann, Miss Ann, what in the world are we to do about you? Your tranquil confidence has no—no rationale. What miracle is it that you hope will happen? What—"

"I don't know," said Ann. "I just feel *something'll* happen. I was sent."

I looked hopelessly at Raffles, sitting facing me in the four-wheeler. A queer half-smile lurked about his lips. My heart gave a sudden great lurch. In a flash, the challenge which the girl had thrown down, not only to the Cavenders, but, all unknowing, to A. J. Raffles, was staring me in the face. As I met his eyes, I knew beyond doubt what was going to happen. Tonight. After dark.

Sure enough, about midnight, a neat brougham belonging to our friend Ivor Kern, antique dealer and receiver of stolen property, with Kern's loyal and discreet coachman, Jem Stoker, on the box, passed over Holborn Viaduct with the horse at a fast trot, to approach The Chess House by a maze of side streets. In the darkness of the brougham, the red dot of Raffles' cigarette alternately kindled and faded.

"This'll be a hard crib to crack Bunny," he said, "but we've

never had a more worthwhile one. It's obvious that the only way the Cavenders' exclusive concession is likely to be broken is through the provision for forfeiture in the event of their being unable at any time to produce the Ming Tan chessmen. We're going to get them. I have on me every safe-breaking tool I possess. With those iron shutters behind the windows, and no back or side entrances, the place looks impregnable. But as we were leaving this afternoon, I spotted a possible weak spot."

My palms were clammy as, having left the brougham in a side street and appointed a rendezvous with Jem, we made the final approach on foot. We were in evening dress, as though returning belated from some Livery Company banquet. Each way, the street stretched vacant, silent, shuttered. The streetlamps glimmered at intervals. The dome of St. Paul's was a black shadow against the night sky.

Arrived at The Chess House, Raffles moved at once to the left of the two front steps. In the angle here, he stamped with his heel on the sidewalk. It gave off a hollow, wooden sound.

"A double-leaf trapdoor with external iron hinges," he said, "just like the sidewalk trapdoors over pub cellars. This one's probably for the ingress of tea-chests. Usually, these sidewalk trapdoors are secured by an iron bar across underneath. Same thing here, as I can tell by the sound." He was down on one knee. He drew a ripsaw from under his cape. "As I thought," he said, "this saw fits nicely into the crack where the two leaves meet. I'm going to saw through the bar. Now, keep cave, Bunny!"

As I peered each way along the street, the rasping of the saw on metal, a sound hollowly intensified by the wooden trapdoor, set the perspiration streaming from me. I thought the dreadful noise never would cease. When, finally, it did, I felt a sweet relief. With a jimmy, Raffles forced up one leaf of the trapdoor, got his gloved fingers under the edge, pulled it up.

"Hold it, Bunny!"

While I held the door at the vertical, Raffles struck a phosphor match, dropped it into the black aperture. The match fell on flagstones beneath, sputtered bluely there for a moment, lighting a vacant space confined between a stone wall and a wooden door. The match went out. Raffles was sitting on the pavement with his legs dangling in the aperture. He gave himself a hitch forward with his hands, dropped from sight, and his voice came up, sepulchral, from the depths.

"Sit on the pavement with your legs dangling," he instructed.

With a quick glance each way along the street, I obeyed, balancing the trapdoor with one hand. I

felt his strong grip on my ankles.

"I've got you," his voice came up to me. "Now, hold yourself rigid, letting the trap down gently as you come."

Again I obeyed, and he took my weight, lowering me slowly, so that I was able to bring the trapdoor shut gently over our heads without the bang it would otherwise have made.

"Good," Raffles muttered. "Now, we've a damned solid door to get through here, by the feel of it." I heard him striking it, sounding it, with the edge of his hand. "No lock, I think, but bolted on the inside. Two bolts, I judge, one about six inches from top, one about six inches from bottom. Right, now—brace-and-bit. Quarter-inch bit, I think. I'm going to drill a hole through, just above each bolt, and close up to the bolt-socket. I've got a very narrow but good length saw here, which I can put through the drilled holes and so saw down through wood and bolts together. A good shoulder-shove should do the rest. Keep your ears pricked for a bobby's footsteps on the pavement overhead."

All I could hear was the steady bite of the greased bit into the wood. I perspired in the thick darkness. It was the longest hour of my life, getting through that door, but at long last we had it open, and we groped forward into darkness of a different quality, dry and warm, fragrantly redolent of tea, nutmeg, cinnamon and sandalwood. Raffles lit our bullseye, shone the dim ray round over stacks of tea-chests bearing Tannee pictographs. From this basement, a short flight of steps led up to a door. It was locked, but Raffles made short work of it with a pick-lock, and we stepped through to find ourselves in the lofty hall with the chessboard floor. We went swiftly up the curving staircase to Roy Cavender's office.

"Question now," said Raffles, "is how tough a nut is the safe going to be."

We went into the adjoining room, Norris Cavender's office, almost the twin of Roy's, except that a square, medium-sized safe stood flush against the lefthand wall. I held the light while Raffles went down on one knee before the safe.

"Ordinary office safe," he said. "Standard-type combination lock. I'd feared something more elaborate." He went to work on the cylinder with his sensitive finger-tips and acute hearing. But after a minute, he stopped and looked up at the lacquered wall above the safe. "That damned ticking," he said. "It puts me off."

I shone the light up on to the clock, a wall-clock in a frame of gilded sunrays. It ticked softly, its hands pointing to twenty-five minutes to two.

"Shall I stop it?" I said.

He shook his head. "No need.

We'll try Monsieur Laënté's little invention."

He took a binural stethoscope from his pocket, adjusted it, went to work again. In a very few minutes, he shifted the stethoscope to his neck, put a hand on the door-lever, depressed it, pulled. Slowly, the heavy door came open and, with an exclamation of triumph, I shone the ray of the bullseye into the safe.

It was stacked with letter-files and pink-taped bundles of documents. No ivory-and-gold chessboard! No ivory box of chessmen! I could not believe my eyes.

"But he *said,*" I exclaimed—"Norris Cavender *said,* to Ann, 'They belong in this building, in the safe in my room'! Raffles, could they possibly have taken the chessmen home with them—to play—to work out some strategy for the game tomorrow?"

He shook his head slowly. He still was kneeling there, staring into the safe.

"Improbable, Bunny," he said. "As far as we know, they've kept them safely in this building, with its iron shutters and teak doors, for a century. Why should they take them home? If they want to play, they wouldn't use the Ming Tan chessmen. They'd have half-a-dozen other sets at home; they're chess—" He broke off. Then he said in an odd tone, pocketing the stethoscope, "They're chess people. With chess minds. Masters of tactical deception, the hidden defense, the counter gambit."

In the silence, the clock ticked softly. Suddenly he looked up at it.

"Bunny," he said, "when Norris came in here to get the chessmen, did you hear this clock ticking—although he'd closed the door behind him?"

"Why, yes," I said, mystified.

"So did I," he said. "But, manalive, it's impossible! No one in Roy's room, with the door closed, could possibly hear the quiet ticking of this clock!" He pushed shut the safe-door, rose swiftly. "Two other points! The clock was audible in Roy's room *only* while Norris was in this room! And he wears a clock-key on his watch-chain! Almost always a clock-key is kept *in* or *behind* or *under* a clock. Why wear a clock-key on your watch-chain?"

He took the light from me. He stepped up on top of the safe. He opened the clock-glass.

"And why," he said softly, "why a third keyhole? One for ordinary winding, one for winding the striker. Why a third, all by itself, just above the figure six?"

My heart thumped, sultry, as I looked up at him.

"I'm going to try an experiment," Raffles said. "Heaven knows what'll happen. We'll chance it."

He took from his pocket a dental pliers with a thin, curved

pincer. He inserted this into the third keyhole, gripped hard, gave a twist to the right. Instantly, the ticking grew louder, heavier, seeming to come from behind the wall, though without change of tempo. Suddenly Raffles leaped down from the safe.

"Damned thing's moving!" he said.

He shone the circle of the bulls-eye on it, and slowly, before our eyes, the safe rose, in a series of quick, slight jerks, vertically, to its own height above the floor, then stopped. And, for the first time, we were seeing *both* halves of that safe, the upper *and* the lower.

Raffles chuckled, in delight. "The chess-playing foxes!" he said. "Bunny, this deserves to be known as the Cavender Ming Tan Defense! Look at it—*two* doors, upper and lower. Lever and combination cylinder external on the upper door, recessed in the lower door. A flange between upper and lower half, the flange overlapping the parquet when the safe is lowered, so giving the appearance of a perfectly ordinary safe flush on a solid parquet floor. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, any cracksman who cracked this safe would go away empty-handed and discouraged!"

He dropped on one knee to examine the combination cylinder of the lower door.

"Same type as the upper," he said. "Bunny, we'll be out of here, up through the sidewalk, with the Ming Tan chessmen, within half-an-hour. Combinations re-set, everything left just as we found it, except for the two sawn bolts and the sawn bar—which may not be spotted for quite a while." And presently, as he drew open the lower door of the safe and took out the Ming Tan chess set, he added wickedly, "And I can't tell you how I'm looking forward to three o'clock tomorrow afternoon!"

It was an afternoon glorious with all the promise of summer. After a pleasant luncheon in Orde Gilmer's chambers in Clifford's Inn, the old solicitor and Ann—neither of whom so much as dreamed of our overnight exertions—with Raffles and myself, arrived at The Chess House in a four-wheeler.

Never had I seen A. J. Raffles so blandly genial, and I was myself hard put to it to conceal my jubilation.

As before, the Cavenders, harsh father and haggard son, received us in the hall. Though both were as men on wires, I had a strong impression that they had no inkling as yet of what had transpired in this building during the night.

The situation was ironic. As we sat in Roy's office, sipping the subtle tea of Ming Tan and exchanging hypocritical civilities, I knew that what restrained Orde Gilmer from suggesting getting

on with the game was his dread of Ann's humiliation, and that what restrained Norris Cavender from making the suggestion was his dread of her triumph. It was Ann herself who put a period to this tortured interlude.

"Shall we," she said pleasantly, "do what we're here to do?"

Norris rose, granite-faced. "I'll bring in the chessmen," he said. "But, first—the man-of-law and the other witness for our side."

He went to the landing door and, on opening it, disclosed a meek, clerkly individual in the act of raising his hand to knock. "Ah, Tonkin," said Norris abruptly, "run along and tell Mr. Crouch, the solicitor, and Mr. Grope, from the counting-house, to come in, now."

"Very good, sir," said Tonkin, who seemed to be in the grip of some strong emotion. "But, sir, we've just found out that down in the basement, sir—"

My scalp suddenly tingled. From the corner of my eye I saw Raffles, smothering a yawn, take a Sullivan from his cigarette-case.

"I cannot talk to you about the basement *now,* Tonkin," said Norris impatiently. "Do as I tell you."

"Yes, sir," quavered poor Tonkin, a hand trembling at his mouth. "But, sir, down in the basement, sir—"

"*Will* you do as I say?" snarled Norris, and he slammed the door, crossed to the door of the adjoining office, went in, and slammed that door, too.

The surge of the pulse in my head was such that it made it hard for me to catch the sound for which I was listening, that of augmented clock-ticking from the next room. Just as, with a tingling thrill, I heard the tell-tale sound, it was drowned by the entry of two frockcoated men, the Cavenders' man-of-law and their accountant, by the door from the landing. There was some byplay of introductions all round by Roy. Into the midst of this to-do there penetrated from the adjoining room an uncanny sound. It was like no sound, whether human or animal, that I ever had heard before. My very hackles rose at it. And it struck the company mute, staring at the door.

Raffles crossed his legs, leaned back in his chair, his expression one of courteous interest.

The door was jerked open. Norris Cavender stood there. He looked as though he had been struck by lightning. His eyes had receded into their sockets. His jaw jutted like a crag. His voice came cracked.

"The Ming Tan chessmen," he said. "*Gone!*"

In the electric silence, Mr. Crouch cleared his throat. "I did hear," he ventured, "some rumor downstairs about—"

"Rumor?" Norris Cavender shouted. "I tell you, they're gone!"

Ann's fingertips went suddenly

to the tiny, ivory figurine of the dancing boy at her throat, and into her dark eyes came a shining wonder. But into the aged eyes of her solicitor, Orde Gilmer, peering at Norris over his spectacles, came an unholy glee. However, before he could claim forfeit of the concession, Roy Cavender cut in.

"Is this really true, father?" he said.

His father did not deign to answer. Not once had he taken his sunken eyes from Ann. There was shrewdness, cunning, hatred in them, and now he spoke to her directly.

"*You!*" he said. "*You're* behind this! You may or may not be capable of beating my son at chess. You couldn't be sure, could you? So you made certain of your forfeit in another way. *You're* behind this! You hired some skillful, wicked scoundrel of a cracksman—"

"That's demonstrably untrue," Roy said sharply. "Princess Kismet was ready and willing to play me yesterday afternoon. It was *we* who backed out. You've made a vile suggestion, father, and I apologize humbly for you to the Princess. I apologize in my capacity as chairman of this firm."

He was standing straighter than I ever had seen him. He looked a different man.

"I've never before reminded you that *I* am chairman, have I?" he said. "As such, I tell you now, I made a decision last night. For a century, in this family, fathers have ground down the faces of their sons into chessboards from the time the poor little devils could toddle. The only game permitted—chess, chess, chess! And why? To hold on for dear life to this concession that's already enriched us out of all reason. It's blinded us to everything else. I've never really understood what we've been losing—until Princess Kismet, yesterday afternoon, sat there in that chair where she's sitting now. When I saw her, when I heard what she said to you—about the tea in blossom—then I really believe my eyes were opened for the first time in my life. I lay awake all night—seeing her, hearing her voice—and I tell you, I came to a decision!"

"What decision?" Norris said thickly.

"The decision," Roy said, "that if, in this game that was to have been played here today, I should find that she could beat me on her merits, well and good. But if I should see that she couldn't, then I was determined to play for self-mate—that is, *compel* her to win!"

He turned to Ann, who was sitting very still, her eyes on him.

"I'm ashamed to have said all this before you, Princess," he said, "but it's the simple truth. So, you see, this astounding coincidence of the theft of the chessmen affects the issue in no way whatever."

I did not breathe. I felt as

though I had been stabbed in the back. I glanced at Raffles. Never had I seen on his face so extraordinary an expression.

"The issue," Roy said, "was decided yesterday. It was decided at the moment, I do truly believe, when you spoke, Princess, of the tea in blossom. I bitterly regret the loss of the chessmen. Not for the sake of this house of Cavender—we've held them for a century—but because, if you and I had sat down to our chess game together, they certainly would have gone back to Ming Tan with you, where they belong. It would have made no difference if you were the worst chessplayer in the world, and I should, most deeply, like you to believe that."

They looked at each other. The rest of us might have been nowhere within a mile radius. And I had a feeling that what was coming into being here between these two, in this queer room of Chess and the Indies, within sight of old St. Paul's, was something high and most enviable, the greatest good fortune that could come to any two people, anywhere, at any time.

"I feel sure," Ann said quietly, "that I should always believe anything you told me, Mr. Cavender."

I felt Raffles' hand on my arm. Very unobtrusively, we went from the room. And all the way down Ludgate Hill in a hansom, up Fleet Street, along the sunlit Strand, we had not a word to say. Not until the horse was clip-clopping up Haymarket did Raffles break the silence between us.

"I think we can take it for granted," he said, "that from here on Ann calls the tune."

My mood was grim. "Raffles," I said, "those chessmen must be returned!"

"What do you take me for?" he said. "Of course they must. I imagine the most graceful method will be to make them an anonymous wedding present. If it'd been *we* who broke the concession, in the way we planned, then we could have hung on to those chessmen—for services rendered—and a small fortune Ivor would have got us for them! But we were rooked, old boy—taken in flank by the Cavender rooks! Who'd have thought Roy would turn round like that? When he revealed that he'd have thrown away that game, then—as gentlemen, after all, dammit—we were beaten. In chess parlance, we were mated. We were mated, the truth is, by the Springtime—and the little god, Ming Tan, who sent Ann, against all reason, half across the world to London."

His tone lightened.

"Incidentally, Bunny," he said, "I begin to suspect that the little god, Ming Tan, is known also, though under another name, in our western world—as the very god of mating."

He chuckled, pointing with his stick as the hansom swung to the

left out of Haymarket into Piccadilly Circus. And there ahead, above the jogging ears of the horse, I saw against the blue sky a recently erected statue of a winged boy, poised on one foot upon his pedestal, levelling bow and arrow at the unsuspecting passers-by—Eros, god of love.

PROTEST

THE WAR IN EUROPE seemed far away in Shanghai in the Spring of 1941. You could still buy everything you wanted in the stores, and drink anything you wanted in the glittering bars and nightclubs for which Shanghai was famous, beautiful gay young White Russians or others helping you to relax as you forgot—for a while—your troubles.

The attractive young Indian Princess Arimah, seen at the "Blue Danube" most evenings, despised the Germans. She said so often, her eyes sparkling with delight as she'd think up new witticisms at the expense of the Master Race. She was a delightful person to talk to—to talk a little nonsense with, for that matter—both knew it didn't mean anything and she was so obviously O. K., disliking the Nazis as she did. . . .

The entry of Japan and the United States into the war changed the picture, however, and the Princess and others were no longer as useful to the German Secret Service as before. The fortunes of the Princess soon declined. She often lived free in the New Asia Hotel, headquarters of the Japanese Secret Service, and sometimes they would let her earn a little money, questioning people suspected of divided loyalties for instance, but not enough for her to get out of the hole she found herself in. She no longer frequented the better bars; she'd be found in the smaller places, the ones the German sailors went to.

One day, in May of '43, acting on information received, Japanese warships, prowling off Formosa, were keeping a lookout for a submarine flying the German flag. Minutes after the sighting it was shelled and boarded, only for the boarders to be met by a high Japanese navy officer who showered them with abuse.

Obviously all concerned had made a slight mistake. Including the Princess, who'd told the Japanese Secret Service that this was an American submarine. When the Japanese, understandably annoyed, began to look for the young lady, she had disappeared. Cynical souls suggested that she had taken this drastic way of objecting to the low Japanese pay. . . .

dutch

by . . . William F. Nolan

He was a real cool operator at moments like this. Except when the fever gripped him, he knew just when to strike.

DUTCH got the idea when we were in Beverly Hills. It was late, almost midnight, and the whole damn town was quiet as a grave. All the fancy stores were dark and we could hear our own footsteps like clapped hands on the pavement. Me and Dutch and Rosa. She was one of his chicks. Dutch had plenty others.

Rosa was seventeen, a real little doll, like you find on the shelf of a toy store, all in blue and pink. She always dressed real nice when Dutch asked her out.

Dutch was eighteen and he looked like a movie star. I mean, handsome in a dark, curly-haired kind of way—like maybe Tony Curtis or somebody. The chicks flipped over him. Rosa for instance.

Me, I'm Eddie Conners, and in the looks department I don't score. Year younger than Dutch; short, with thick glasses. Dutch always used to tell me that my eyes looked like two crazy fish swimming around behind the lenses. The chicks pass me by, and I guess I don't blame them

William F. Nolan, free-lance writer well known on the West Coast, makes a first appearance in THE SAINT *with this grim short-short about some talented young men who live in a world of their own making, with its own language, problems and standards, and what happens one foggy evening.*

any. Sometimes Dutch would fix me up with a cute chick, but she'd spend more time looking at him than she would me when we double-dated.

Anyway, on this particular night Dutch got the idea we should cop a couple of new irons and have ourselves a little dice over Mulholland Drive.

"Me against you, Eddie," he grinned. "You game, boy?"

"Sure," I said. "Why the hell not! Only let's be sure we get two alike. You could walk away from me in some souped-up short."

"Then let's start lookin' around."

Rosa put up no objections. What was okay by Dutch was okay by her.

We found a couple of new Fords near Martindale's bookstore. Lucky, too; they were both '56 Sunliners. Dutch was a real cool operator when it came to a deal like this. He told us to wait over in the building shadows and keep our eyes open while he got the cars started. Dutch didn't need keys, not the way he worked. In about two shakes he had both engines purring like a pair of big cats. We were all set to go.

"Now, listen," he said to me. "You follow my iron over Coldwater to Mulholland. Then, we'll line up even for a run. I claim by the third turn you'll be outa sight behind me!"

"We'll see, Dutch," I said.

Rosa got in front with him and they glided away from the curb with me in the other Ford right behind. I sure like the way a new car feels—powerful and ready to do anything you want it to.

I felt pretty great tooling along smooth and easy, like some big high-class banker maybe, or some big office Joe out for a spin in his new car. My folks are tramp-poor and everything I make at the warehouse goes to the family. I couldn't afford a car of my own.

Then I pretended that Rosa was sitting next to me instead of next to Dutch. Real close, with her head on my shoulder. That was damn nice. I could almost smell that sexy perfume she wore and see her smile just for me. Yeah, Rosa was a real gone chick, and no mistake.

We were taking it easy around town because we didn't want any cops on our tail. Beverly Hills is lousy with cops at night. I saw the turn-indicator blink on in Dutch's Ford; he was swinging into an all-night gas station. What the hell was wrong with the guy, anyhow? Why risk being pegged in these hot buggies? I was plenty sore when I got out.

"You *nuts*?" I demanded, keeping my voice down. "What's the lousy idea?"

"Tires," he said. "What if the

tires are low when we hit that cliff road? Hell, boy, we'd go on our heads for sure. You check 'em while I hit the can. Thirty-two all the way round should be okay."

I waved the station guy away and began to check pressures.

Rosa stayed in Dutch's car, fixing her face, touching lightly at her hair. She was always primping around Dutch, trying to look prettier than she did already. She didn't need to. Rosa looked plenty good to me all the time. She had natural blonde hair and a hell of a figure and she *really* knew how to walk.

"How were they?" Dutch asked me.

"My left rear was low," I said. "Good thing we checked."

"Damn right. I just don't like taking chances is all."

We climbed back in the Fords and got going. As long as we kept it at twenty-five we were okay. We'd done this before, taken out a couple of hot irons for a joyride. No dice then. Just a ride. Afterwards we took 'em right back where we found 'em and nobody knew the difference.

I snapped on some dance music. Rosa was sure a wonderful dancer. Once, in Gardena, when Dutch was pooped, Rosa asked me to hoof it with her. I remembered how light and airy she felt in my arms that night, how soft and warm she'd been. *Damn!*

We'd crossed Sunset, taken the long climb up Coldwater and I got ready for the sharp right-hand turn onto Mulholland. Easy to miss if you're not on the ball. I followed Dutch around, taking it slow. He waved me up, and I pulled my Ford alongside his.

"This is it, Eddie." He was smiling in that handsome crooked way of his. "We dig on three. Rosa will do the counting."

"Wait a minute," I said. "Rosa's weight adds better than a hundred pounds to your iron."

"So?"

"So I don't want any advantage. Either we start equal or it's all off."

The road stretched away ahead of us, narrow and treacherous and misted with fog.

"Okay, okay." Dutch reached across and opened Rosa's door. "Wait here for us, baby. We'll make the run down to Laurel Canyon and back."

"Right, Dutch," she said, sliding out. "But, be careful, hon."

Her voice was soft and husky and I figured she must practice talking that way, knowing how sexy she sounded.

"Nervous, Eddie?" Dutch asked, grinning at me out the open car window. He jazzed the Ford's mill and it was mean. Real mean.

"Hell, no," I snapped, lighting a cig. I was lying. Sure I was

nervous. Who wouldn't be with a set-up like this?

Rosa was standing to one side, her arm raised, ready to flag us off. She looked like a little pink doll in the bright glare of our headlights.

Dutch was grinning, the way he always does when he's real sure of something. He was sure he'd cream me on this stretch. Mulholland is a bitch at night, with the fog hanging low over those hairpin turns, and a long drop waiting for you if you goof. He'd driven it a lot more than I had, and he knew the road pretty well. He was used to irons, too; he could stomp through the turn and broadslide like a pro. Sure I was nervous.

"Ready, fellas?" Rosa shouted.

I stubbed out the cig on the Ford's dash and tried to relax. I juiced the engine to make sure she was firing right and got all set behind the wheel.

"One . . . Two . . ."

I could feel the sudden sweat on the palms of my hands. God, but I wished it was all over! The whole thing was crazy and unreal.

"Three!"

We were off like twin jets, engines screaming, our tires squealing on the damp asphalt. I gave the Ford all the pedal she'd take in first and held Dutch, but when I snap-shifted into second he was by me and moving for the first turn. It was a fairly rough one and I eased off a little, watching Dutch throw his car in. He fishtailed like mad and his Ford was all over the road. He was really pushing.

I got through without much trouble and we headed for the next turn. He pulled away from me on the short straight and I let him go. Hell with it! No use risking my own neck on this kind of road.

The second turn wasn't bad at all—just a bend really—but the one coming up was a lulu. I remembered I'd almost gone off there once myself in my cousin's Chevy and I hadn't been dicing then.

Dutch was going like a crazy man, booming through the bend, ragged and swaying with speed. I knew he'd never make it through the hairpin.

And he didn't.

The whole rear end of his car broke loose and slid sideways. I could see him fighting the wheel, but it didn't help. He was in the kind of slide that only ends one way.

Dutch went over.

I saw his Ford jump the little raised hump at the edge of the road, hover for maybe a split second in the air, like it couldn't make up its mind which way to go, and then drop out of sight.

I'll never forget the long roar it made going down, bumping

over rocks and brush and trees, clear to the bottom.

Pulling over, I cut the engine and got out.

I was trembling. I shook loose a cigarette and lit it; the smoke felt good. I began to relax.

Dutch was dead. That was for sure. Nobody, but nobody, could live through one like this. Besides, I could hear a dry crackling sound, like crumpled cellophane, and I knew the car was burning down there. Yeah, Dutch was finished all right.

What really got me was how dumb he'd played things. When he made that first rough turn and felt the whole car going he should have known something was haywire. But, he wouldn't stop in the middle of a dice, not Dutch. The fever was in him, and that's what I'd counted on. Anything to beat me. In racing or in pool or with women. Beat ole Eddie. Make him look like a damn fool.

Well, Dutch, this time *you* lost. Because not even you could corner at speed with only fifteen pounds of air in your back tires!

I killed the cig and fired up the Ford. I'd better hurry.

Rosa would be wondering what happened.

NEXT MONTH—

A son discovers his father's secret in
Pearl Buck's A MAN'S FOES

We meet a group of conspirators in
Eric Ambler's ARMY OF THE SHADOWS

A lovely young wife disappears in
Sax Rohmer's LIMEHOUSE RHAPSODY

Dr. Thorndyke tracks down a murderer in
R. Austin Freeman's FATAL RUBY

We meet the original Frankie in
Stewart Sterling's
FRANKIE AND VARIOUS JOHNNIES

A latter-day Lady Macbeth meets the Saint in
Leslie Charteris' THE OLD ROUTINE

and

APPOINTMENT WITH DEATH

A New Story by LAWRENCE G. BLOCHMAN

—in the *Saint*

parmill has disappeared

by . . . Hugh Wiley

The man was missing—and a hundred thousand dollars. Had China's enemies caught up with him? Was he dead?

TROUBLE with a thrust bearing held the *Palomita* in the open sea seventy miles out of San Francisco Bay for three sunlit days and three clear nights. On the fourth evening of her distress, Monday night, a dripping fog obscured the crescent moon. The fog seemed to have a curative effect on the *Palomita*'s thrust bearings. Before midnight, under a slow bell, she nosed through the Golden Gate.

Barely under steerage way a sudden activity replaced the quiet on the ship's forward deck. A power launch drifted out of the night and nestled against the *Palomita*'s quarter. The launch, trailing on a line, slid aft along the tramp's rusty hull for eighty feet and then held her position for eighteen minutes. When the launch cast off and stood away from the steamer she carried a hundred Chinamen who had come over the ship's side. Within the hour these Chinese men had become members of the colony of their countrymen in San Francisco.

The enterprise should have been accomplished with complete secrecy, but before the launch had

Hugh Wiley, who served with the A. E. F. in Europe during World War I, while an engineer and a contractor for bridges and bridge foundations, is best known as the creator of soft-spoken James Lee Wong, of the United States Department of Justice, an interesting and rather unorthodox detective.

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landed its Chinese cargo the wireless operator on the *Palomita* had tied in with a short-wave set in a Japanese residence on Fillmore Street. Forty words in private code went through with only casual interference at that hour, to the alert ears of Amano Kimura. To the world at large Mr. Kimura was a recognized authority on various branches of oriental art.

Immediately upon receipt of the message from the wireless operator of the *Palomita,* Mr. Kimura's interest in oriental art gave place to a sudden activity in connection with a more material project. Forthwith he left his apartment in the Fillmore Street house and headed for Chinatown.

On Tuesday morning at 9 o'clock in his San Francisco apartment James Lee Wong received Sam Wing. Facing his diminutive Chinese countryman, James Lee smiled. "The years have been kind to you," he said. "You look younger than you did in your freshman year."

"Yale was a grind," Sam Wing answered. "Too much night work."

"And now each night as chief of aviation for the Nanking Government you enjoy eight or ten hours of sound, refreshing sleep?" Irony tempered the speaker's smile. "I hope that you will not sleep too much."

Sam Wing scowled. "I have slept too much," he admitted. "I need your help. Can I tell you my story—off the record?"

After a moment, "On the pay roll of the United States Government I am an operative in the Department of Justice," James Lee answered. "In this room for the moment I am your former classmate and your friend. Tell your story."

"Do you know Edgar Parmill?"

"I met him in Shanghai six years ago. One of the greatest flyers in the world. Is he in town?"

"Parmill and I came in from China last week," Sam Wing said.

"He works for you?"

"He works with me. Nominally I'm his chief. Actually he knows more aviation in ten minutes than I'll learn in a lifetime. We came over to buy four bombing planes from the Meteor people. Parmill has been under cover at the Palace Hotel since he got here. I have been here on Grant Avenue. One of the Meteor representatives is down from Seattle."

"Where is he?"

"At the Palace. We were to have signed the contract for the four planes this morning. Parmill didn't show up."

James Lee nodded. "And Parmill has the money. It's a cash transaction, I suppose. What price the four planes?"

"Twenty-five thousand apiece. Parmill had a hundred thousand in cash at one o'clock this morning—but please do not suggest—"

"You never can tell—"

"You can tell with Parmill," Sam Wing declared vehemently. "A million in gold would not buy that man. It's been tried."

"Parmill does not happen to be a Chinese patriot by any chance, does he?"

Sam Wing frowned. Facing his tall companion, "You never believed in anything," he accused. "You were always that way. You never gave any man credit for decent motives. Parmill is one of China's greatest friends. He is my friend."

"A hundred thousand dollars is a lot of money." James Lee yawned and reached for a cigarette. "Speaking of my beliefs—I believe in human nature," he suggested.

Sam Wing paced the length of the room. Returning, he looked straight at James Lee. "I think I made a mistake coming to you," he said.

James Lee nodded. "You've made several mistakes in your time. Your stupidity is notorious in Tokyo. Your mistake of last night is a perfect example of your stupidity."

"What do you mean?"

"That gold-bearing cargo of Cantonese that came ashore from the *Palomita.*"

"You know about that?"

"There is a report of it on my desk over there."

A look of fear clouded Sam Wing's eyes. "Jim," he said, "you wouldn't—"

James Lee shook his head. "No, I wouldn't," he said reassuringly. "Maybe you forget that you're in the house of a friend."

"Then for the sake of friendship find Parmill for me. Our people care nothing about the money. Find Parmill for us. We need him."

"Where did you see him last?"

"There was a midnight banquet —half a dozen of the Five Family men, three or four of the Friends of China crew, an American man, old Sing Lung, Parmill and I."

"Where was this?"

"In the Five Family banquet hall in Sing Lung's house."

"Who was the American?"

"Egan Rylett. He gave ten thousand dollars to the Cause last year."

James Lee nodded. "That was last year," he suggested. "What happened?"

"Specifically, somewhere around one o'clock old Sing Lung and some more of the Five Family men opened the Tong safe and handed over a hundred thousand dollars."

"Handed it to Parmill?"

Sam Wing nodded. "Yes. Parmill and I counted it. He put the money in his pocket. He left Sing Lung's place ten or fifteen minutes later in a taxicab. We were to have breakfast together this morning at eight o'clock. Our date with the Meteor man was for nine o'clock. I telephoned Parmill's room at eight o'clock and there was no an-

swer. One of the hotel men opened the room for me at eight-thirty. Parmill had not slept in his bed. I don't think he returned to the hotel. If he did no one saw him."

James Lee was silent for a moment and then, "Sounds like a tough one," he said. "Let's go over and have a talk with Sing Lung."

Sam Wing's eyes lighted. "You will help me?"

James Lee nodded. "I'll do what I can," he promised.

Sing Lung, nominal head of the Five Family clan, greeted James Lee and Sam Wing in the reception-room of his house. Phrases spoken according to the ritual of Right Conduct used up the first two minutes of the meeting and then, replacing his steel-bowed spectacles, "How may I serve you?" Sing Lung asked.

"Edgar Parmill, the American, has disappeared," James Lee said.

Sing Lung's eyes widened. "With the money?"

"With the money—but that is of no consequence compared to his safety," Sam Wing interposed. "Mr. Lee would like to talk to the taxi driver who took Mr. Parmill to the Palace Hotel. Can you find him?"

Old Sing Lung nodded. "Easily enough. He sleeps every morning in a room rented from my cousin. He will be here in ten minutes."

Addressing the taxi driver, a free-lancing pirate of Grant Avenue's night life, ten minutes later, "You are an Italian?" James Lee asked.

"A Serbian."

"Where did you take the American gentleman who left the dinner party last night at one o'clock or one-fifteen?"

"He wanted to go to the Palace Hotel. He said the Montgomery Street entrance."

"Did you take him to the Palace?"

"He stopped me half a block before we got to Market Street. He said he wanted to get some cigarettes."

"Did you get them for him?"

"He got out and paid me off. He said he would get his cigarettes and walk across Market Street to the Palace."

"Did you see what shop he went to?"

"I never seen him after he paid me. I turned around and beat it back to my stand."

James Lee nodded at the man. "That's all," he said.

When the Serbian had left, "Somebody got Parmill between the cigar store and the hotel," Sam Wing suggested.

James Lee nodded. "Probably. That doesn't help us much."

"What about talking to the cops on that beat?"

"Not yet," Lee answered. "I think I'd like to see Mr. Rylett. Call him up and make a date for me, will you?"

"You going to tell him that Parmill has disappeared?"

"He probably knows it."

"I don't think so."

"How long has he known Parmill?"

"He never met him before last night. Rylett doesn't like many people. He's rich enough so that he doesn't have to. Parmill made a hit with him. They talked Chinese art and stone-age stuff for an hour together. Rylett is a nut on Chinese archeology. When he found out that Parmill had opened up a string of graves in Kansu he went deaf to everything else."

"Rig up a date for me," James Lee repeated. "I may introduce a dash of art into my conversation with Mr. Rylett." Smiling grimly, "Stone-age stuff."

"You sound like Rylett was a member of the enemy camp," Sam Wing objected. "He is a friend of China."

James Lee scowled. "China has various sorts of friends."

"You're still capable of a little twisted thinking."

James Lee's eyes narrowed. "No doubt," he admitted. "Get on the phone and see what you can do with Rylett. Date me for dinner if you can."

Greeting Mr. Lee at eight o'clock that evening, "I am delighted to have you as my guest," Egan Rylett said. "Most opportune! Mr. Wing tells me you are interested in Chinese art. Happy coincidence! Amano Kimura is dining with us tonight. You've heard of him—the great Japanese authority on Han pottery and the earlier Chinese bronzes."

"Everyone has heard of him," James Lee complimented. "I thought he was still in Peru." Clawing through the archives of his memory for another Kimura item, "The monograph on Peruvian pottery—Kimura did some work in that field years ago, if I remember."

Egan Rylett beamed with pleasure and with a quick vicarious pride in this tribute to Amano Kimura. "Two men today—two men alone are masters of that subject! Kimura is one of them."

Meeting Amano Kimura, James Lee shook hands with the Japanese. "I am honored. How is your work in Peru?"

"Very happy to meet the distinguished Mr. James Lee," Kimura declared. "I have had some success in Peru." He lifted a cigarette to his lips and devoted the next four seconds to an obvious enjoyment of its aroma.

A thin drift of smoke from Kimura's cigarette wavered toward James Lee. "Interesting cigarette," the Chinese reflected. "Indian grown—with a dash of majoon. Gunjah." To Kimura, quickly, and without being conscious of the impulse that prompted the question, "You have lived in Calcutta?"

Kimura looked up at James Lee. A faint expression of surprise marked his reply. "For a year. Why?"

Regretting his ill-timed inquiry, James Lee resorted to a lie: "A friend of mine in Calcutta, Semple Wainwright, told me about your researches in Peru."

"Mr. Kimura has lived in Peru for five years," Egan Rylett interposed.

At this, glancing at Rylett and then looking up at James Lee through narrowed eyelids, "Your friend Wainwright is also a secret operative for the Department of Justice? Or should I say 'secret'?"

Before James Lee could reply, Egan Rylett stepped away from his two guests. He looked at James Lee in undisguised surprise. "You are an agent of the Department, Mr. Lee?"

The Chinese nodded at his host. "Everyone seems to know that."

"But Sam Wing said that you were an authority on—"

"I must confess that I am only an amateur in Chinese art. It is, let us say, my pleasure—not my vocation."

The moment became frozen. Lee damned himself for the maladroit inquiry that had been prompted by the scent of Amano Kimura's cigarette. Then leaping into the silence with a patent air of frankness, "The Department has several of us out here covering the San Francisco-Denver gold transfer," he explained. "Carrying millions of dollars in gold hundreds of miles is a tempting opportunity for some of the country's bad actors."

"Two billion dollars in gold, isn't it?" Egan Rylett did the best he could to thaw the frozen moment. "May I offer you cocktails before we dine?"

The cocktails were served in chilled cups of white jade.

"These are delicious," James Lee complimented. "I have never tasted such an intriguing combination of flavors. Am I wrong in congratulating you on a successful combination of bourbon and curaçao?"

Egan Rylett smiled. "The chocolate flavor betrays it," he suggested.

"Chocolate? Cinnamon, mace, cloves, perhaps—but no chocolate."

"There must be chocolate in it," Rylett insisted. "Let me get a book I have. Strange that neither one of us seems to know what is in curaçao. . . . No matter. May I offer you a second one?"

James Lee bowed. "Thank you."

"Will you look it up in the encyclopedia, Mr. Lee? I'll be back in a moment. I want to see if my butler knows anything about this stuff. You'll find the encyclopedia over by that window."

On page 362 of volume 6 of the encyclopedia under "Curaçao" James Lee read three lines of the

text aloud to Amano Kimura: "A well-known and palatable liqueur, made from orange peel by digesting it in sweetened spirits, with certain spices—" and here his reading was interrupted by a quick sneeze.

"That cigarette of Kimura's is very pungent," the Chinese reflected, realizing that a strong scent of hashish had made him sneeze.

"—as cinnamon, mace, or cloves," he continued. He looked up quickly, "Forgive me," he apologized. His eyes fell again to the text in the open book. An inch under "Curaçao" he read, "Curare, a celebrated poison used by some tribes of South American . . . causing complete paralysis without affecting consciousness."

Returning from his interview with his butler, "You're right, Mr. Lee," Egan Rylett admitted. "There is no chocolate in curaçao. Here I am sixty years old—a man with a fair knowledge of such things and up to this moment I have believed that curaçao contained chocolate."

"According to the encyclopedia it contains an essence of orange peel and cinnamon and other spices. Chocolate isn't mentioned. Perhaps you confuse curaçao with cacao."

"Perhaps that is it. . . . Dinner is announced. Shall we go in?"

As the dinner progressed, Lee became increasingly conscious of the problem that faced him. Under the small talk, of which there was a minimum, and the heavier conversation, his thoughts reverted incessantly to the fate of Edgar Parmill. *"Where is Parmill? If these men got Parmill, how did they get him?"*

In the interval preceding dessert Lee contemplated subjecting Egan Rylett to a brief interrogation relative to his association with Edgar Parmill and the purchase of the bombing planes. After a moment's thought he doubted the advisability of mentioning Parmill's name. He thought of the twin machine guns mentioned in the specifications. He remembered a phrase that Sam Wing had used—"synchronized to fire through the propeller arc." He realized that he must time any inquiry relative to Parmill with a similar precision. "Or why not release a hundred-pound demolition bomb and be done with it?" Instinct told him that he was nearing the battle ground. *"Who is Kimura? He's a shark on archeology—but what else is he?"*

Egan Rylett's butler spoke quietly to his master. Turning to James Lee, "There is a telephone call for you, Mr. Lee," Rylett said. Then, "Sam Wing is calling you. May I have the telephone brought here to the table?"

"That was a bit crude," the Chinese reflected. Aloud, "Thank you, yes."

Over the telephone, "The police have found Parmill," Sam

Wing said. "Are you alone there?"

"Two loads on the bomb rack mounted right and left," Lee answered. "That clause was in the specifications."

"I understand. Parmill is in the Emergency Hospital. He has been drugged with something that left him paralyzed. He is still alive and conscious. The *Chronicle* and the *Examiner* had extras on the street ten minutes ago. The police know who Parmill is. I believe they are turning the case over to the State Department."

Instantly, taking a long chance, inspired by an unaccountable impulse, "You will find the address of the Portuguese agents in Potter's Directory," James Lee said. "Caroval was the high man when I knew the outfit. Vao Caroval. V-a-o C-a-r-o-v-a-l."

"I get you."

"I will return to my apartment around midnight. If I can be of any further help let me know. . . . I have my own car. See you later."

Returning the telephone to Rylett's butler, who stood beside his chair, "Sam Wing is a bargain hunter," Lee announced. "He is on the trail of a dozen second-hand planes that are owned by a Portuguese outfit," Lee explained. "Sorry to interrupt. Incidentally, do either of you happen to know Vao Caroval?"

"I do not know him," Rylett said.

"A Portuguese gentleman, you say?" Something about Kimura's question sent an honest thrill of fear down James Lee's spine.

"I think he is a Portuguese—of Latin stock at any rate."

"Vao and Caroval are native names for a South American poison known as curare in the Materia Medica," Kimura explained, smiling in a superior manner. "The Potter who publishes the directory you mentioned would not be related to the distinguished author of the book on poisons and various medical works?"

At this question a burden of doubt seemed to lift from James Lee's heart. He realized instantly that his problem was simplified. He sought quickly to follow his advantage with the impelling force of a direct question. Facing Kimura, "Why did you kill Edgar Parmill?" he asked.

From his left, "Mr. Lee! What do you mean?" Egan Rylett demanded. "Do you insinuate—"

The rest of Rylett's question was drowned in a series of explosions that boomed from the muzzle of a .30-caliber automatic in Amano Kimura's hand. The Japanese held the gun steady on the edge of the table. The gun was aimed at James Lee's heart. Kimura fired five shots before the grimace of hatred in his face changed to a sardonic smile of physical anguish when his fire was returned from a weapon in his opponent's hand.

James Lee put his heavy service .45 back into its holster slung un-

der his left armpit. He turned to Egan Rylett. "If you will be kind enough to pour a glass of brandy for Kimura perhaps we can keep him alive for a while. I would like to force a confession out of him—to keep the records straight."

Rylett, his eyes wide with terror, was backing slowly away from James Lee. "Keep him alive?" he questioned thickly. And then, "But you—aren't you shot?"

"Steel vest," Lee said briefly. "Dented a little bit perhaps, but that's all . . . Mr. Rylett, I must apologize for this messy affair—but Edgar Parmill is dying. Kimura got him. Poisoned him with curare, the torturing fiend."

An hour after midnight, in his apartment on Grant Avenue, facing Sam Wing, "Rylett had nothing to do with Parmill's murder," James Lee declared. "Kimura's confession clears him."

"Where is the hundred thousand?"

"Kimura had it in his pocket. Here it is—with my compliments."

"China thanks you. This means four bombing planes for use against her enemies."

"You'd better cut out the midnight immigration stuff or I'll have to look you over officially. Why not use more of Rylett's money?"

Sam Wing smiled. "If it will clear your conscience, we're shipping a hundred of our countrymen, fighters, back to China on the *Tenyo Maru*. . . . My God, Jimmy, you were playing against heavy odds."

"Not so heavy. My own ignorance was the main obstacle. I should have known about Kimura's tie-up with Tokyo. As it happens, I'm lucky—Kimura dug his own grave. Curare. The fool made his big mistake in his question about Major Potter—you remember when I mentioned Vao Caroval over the telephone? Ego. Kimura had to show me then and there that he knew more about South American arrow poisons than I did. Vao and Caroval—curare has fifty names. . . . Poor Parmill."

"Terrible," Sam Wing commented. "Lying there completely conscious, wide awake, utterly helpless—paralyzed."

"Kimura confessed that he got him with a jab in the shoulder two minutes after Parmill got out of that taxicab."

James Lee continued. "Kimura dug his own grave—after the trifling little curaçao argument . . . You remember that night in New Haven when I drew the jack of diamonds in a stud game and made a straight flush? Those things happen now and then. Just plain lucky."

sing a song of murder

by . . . Lawrence Treat

Sometimes he felt as if he had a personal feud with Death, since the day when his brother had been shot.

HE LOOKED like pretty much everybody else in those waterfront hangouts. The stained old dungarees, the blue shirt and the worn frayed jacket were the same. Rangy, flat-stomached, battle-scarred and flea-bitten and hungry-looking, at home in the two square feet where his shoes were standing —that was the same too. But when you looked at his eyes, then you saw the difference.

Blue eyes, with more eagerness in them, with a hint of the grin that hoisted the freckles on his cheeks up to the level of his ears. Blue eyes, with more futility in them, with that latent desperation of a man who has been looking for something for years and knows at last that he won't find it. And knowing he won't, still goes at it with a kind of blind, obstinate, repressed fury.

He came out of the Sail Inn and crossed the street to Joe Palooka's, from one waterfront bar to another, and not enjoying it. He measured time by the number of bars he visited and work by how much beer he could choke down. A hell of a life, and he was beginning to show it.

Lawrence Treat, veteran mystery writer, author of the recent BIG SHOT *(Harper's) and* WEEP FOR A WANTON *(Ace) and long active with the Mystery Writers of America, turns to the waterfront in this early story, written in the days, not so long ago at that, when the FBI was young.*

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So he strode through the open doorway of Joe Palooka's, marched up to the bar in a careless loping gait and slapped down a coin. "My last dime. Two beers," he ordered. "First one and then the other."

It excited attention, that. A guy who had ten cents left in the world, the price of two beers, and wanted them both together so he could get it over with. A good system. Somebody always struck up a conversation and in the course of it Afe Madison would manage to slip in his question. And then, as soon as he could, on to the next bar and the whole damn business all over again. He felt as if beer were leaking out of his eyes and his ears and sweating through his socks until his shoes were soggy with it.

"Two beers. First one and then the other."

But this time he got a new response, in a big husky voice at his shoulder. "Bring the both of them together, Joe."

The bartender half turned as if he were in the middle of a step and couldn't get his balance. Then he laughed. "Sure, Seattle."

Afe turned too and stared at Seattle. A big man, blond and quiet and smooth-cheeked as a woman, he didn't look as if he'd been trying to butt in. But the words were there anyhow.

"Kind of free with another guy's money," said Afe.

Seattle just laughed at him. "You got me wrong, Bud. I take the second one, sure, but the next round's on me and then you take the second."

Afe relaxed and began smiling. "Yeah," he said, "I got you wrong, at that. You from Seattle, or is that just a name?"

"Little of each," declared the big man and reached out for a beer. *"Skaal!"*

Afe said, *"Skaal!"* and tackled the beer. It tasted like the twenty-third pie must have tasted to the guy who won the pie-eating contest, but Afe kept up the comedy with the endurance of an old trouper.

"I sure needed that," he said. "I got two hundred miles of thirst in me and it dies slow. I just come in on a freight."

"Looking for work?"

"Down the docks, if there's a job."

"No jobs. I'm down there and I know. A guy by the name of Bill Noonan runs things. You pay him a buck, and then maybe you work and maybe you don't." Seattle's eyes took on a dreamy expression. "I'd sure like to work enough to save a few bucks. I'd take the first road out and head for the West Coast. That's the place. You been there?"

Afe nodded. "I follow the climate." He said it like a yachtsman explaining why he'd brought his ship south.

Seattle made a face. "Climate!" he said. "If they got any lousier

than this, they ain't put it on the map yet. Hey, Joe! A couple of beers."

Afe took a deep breath and wondered whether he could down another without exploding. "I come here for a different reason," he remarked casually. "I'm trying to catch up to a guy and I figure I'll run into him if I keep rolling. He owes me a few bucks, and the guy that locates him for me gets a cut."

"Yeah? What's his name?"

"Jim Camp," said Afe, and looked anxious. That was his question—the question he asked everywhere. As soon as Seattle said no, Afe figured he'd try one more bar and then hire a room and sleep it off. "Jim Camp," he repeated. "Thin face and used to be an oiler."

Seattle grabbed at Afe's sleeve. "Listen, you mean that about the cut? How much?"

"Five bucks."

Seattle began laughing. "Listen, I left that mug twenty minutes ago."

Afe's answer came sharp and bitten off. "In that case, where is he?"

But Seattle just shrugged. "If that guy had five bucks, he'd bury it in the ground and stand watch over it with a gun."

Afe stared intently. "Where is he?" he repeated.

"Hotel across the street. But you won't be able to see him now, Bud. He's up there with Noonan."

Afe laughed as if the world were a good place, and the freckles rose up to his ears. "We'll see about that," he sang out, and marched from the bar.

It was getting dark outside and the street looked even older and shabbier and dingier than when Afe Madison had gone into the saloon. There was one lamp at each end of the block. In another hour or so the middle of the block would be a swell place for a murder. The thought occurred casually to Afe, but the word sent his mind off on a brooding tangent and then swung it round again so that he couldn't get past that one word. It was like a bar of a song you've heard and can't get out of your head. Murder. Murder. Sing a song of murder.

Afe tightened his jaw and shook the cobwebs out of his brain. He was no good when he began thinking this way. He glanced at the buildings opposite and let his eye stray until it caught the sign "Hotel" in letters that used to be white porcelain. The only dignity about the place was that one word. The beds were probably a quarter a night, double-deckers, with the bugs free.

He crossed over in his unhurried lope, walked up the steps and kicked dust out of a carpet. A thin, frowzy woman mumbled, "You wanna room for the night? We got running water and—"

Afe said, "Not now. I was

looking for somebody. Man by the name of Camp. He's with Noonan."

"He wouldn't wanna be disturbed."

"Lady, when he hears what I got to say, he won't think about nothing else."

The word "Lady" made her raise her head. She hadn't been called that in a long time, and it set her cackling. "The bellboy's off for the night so you'll have to find the room by yourself. One flight up, turn right and it's the last door."

Afe grinned, said, "Thanks," and started up the stairs. He could have waited downstairs, but the atmosphere was too depressing. Besides, he wanted to get this thing done and over with. He loosened the gun in its holster, hoped Noonan wouldn't present complications, and then felt his way down the second-floor corridor.

At the last door, he listened to the low murmur of voices but couldn't distinguish words. He knocked and then pushed it open without waiting for an answer.

Two men jerked to their feet. The room was dirty and had massive old furniture which looked even dirtier in the yellowish light. Afe glanced at it and glanced at the thin face with the sharp eyes and the long narrow nose and identified it in a fraction of a second. But he didn't do what he'd intended to do. Instead, he stared at Noonan.

Afe happened to catch him in profile, against the silverish light at the window. Noonan was a short, heavy man, fattish, decisive, abrupt. His nose was high in the bridge and the bone had been chipped or broken so that the line of the nose dipped and then went up. In a vague way, Noonan looked a little like Napoleon.

Noonan was the first to speak. "Well," he barked, "what the hell do you want?"

"Sorry. I didn't know you were busy, or I wouldn't have busted in on you."

"Well, you're here now. What the hell do you want?"

Afe licked his lips. Here he was with two men. One of them he'd chased up and down the entire length of the Atlantic seaboard, and the other he'd dreamt about meeting for fifteen years. He could pull his gun and march the pair of them out of the room and do anything in the world he wanted with them, and nobody the wiser except Seattle and a half-witted blonde downstairs in the dingy entrance hall.

Then something shot through Afe's mind and he knew he'd spent his whole life on a dream, and now that the dream had come true it was still a dream.

So he locked his lips and tried to think of an out and couldn't. "I wanted a job," he said. "They told me you were the guy to see."

Noonan sprang forward as if he were going to sock Afe. But suddenly Noonan stopped short and burst out laughing. "You poor sap!" he roared. "So they told you to come up here and bust in on me and ask for a job! Now who the hell told you that?"

"Some guy I met down in a bar."

"Listen," said Noonan. "Ninety-nine times out of a hundred you'd come up here like that and I'd blow up and chuck you clean through the window, but I don't feel that way tonight. And you know what I'm gonna do? I'm gonna give you a job!"

Afe thought of all the things he'd planned to do and couldn't do and should have known he couldn't do. And he listened to Noonan's voice and looked at his nose and was helpless, thinking about murder.

"You go down tomorrow," rasped Noonan, "and tell 'em I sent you and they'll put you on. And now get the hell out!"

Afe turned slowly and heavily, closed the door behind him and felt his way back along the dark corridor, down the stairs and out into the street again. Then he took a deep breath, pulled out a cigarette, lit up and leaned against a wall. He needed time to collect his ideas. . . .

He thought of a kid in striped pajamas sitting at the head of the stairs in upstate New York, fifteen years ago, listening to his big brother talk. The big brother was the greatest man in the world to the kid and he was a Federal man.

The kid brother at the head of the stairs was sleepy because he'd sneaked out of bed to hear his hero, Spike, talk, and every once in a while the kid brother would sort of fall asleep and miss the conversation down there in the living room, but then he'd catch himself and wake up.

He heard a lot. He heard the name of the man Spike was after, and he heard how Spike was going to get him and what the man had done. But the kid brother was pretty sleepy and he forgot all that and never managed to remember.

There was one thing, however, that he didn't forget. Spike had said: "I call him Boney, this fellow I'm after, and you know why? He looks exactly like that bust of Napoleon Bonaparte on the mantel, chipped nose and all. In fact, the chipped nose is his chief identifying feature."

Then the kid brother up on the stairs fell asleep and rolled halfway down the staircase, and Spike picked him up and carried him back to bed. The kid wouldn't go to sleep until Spike had shown him the picture of Boney, the man he was going to nab. And he did look like the chipped Napoleon.

There wasn't much of a sequel to Spike. Four days later he walked up to a man in Syracuse, said, "You're wanted," and was shot.

Through the heart. Spike didn't have the picture with him any more and nobody knew whom he was after. Nobody except the kid brother who'd sat at the top of the stairs and listened till he'd fallen asleep. And the youngster carried around a mental picture of the chipped Napoleon on the mantelpiece.

The newspapers had forgotten it long ago, the public had forgotten it and the police had forgotten. Even the F.B.I. forgot. But the kid brother didn't. And he thought only of revenge.

It was for that reason that Afe had applied to the F.B.I., and in all his work over a period of years he kept looking for Boney, the chipped Napoleon. And now Boney was sitting upstairs in a big dingy hotel room, and Afe suddenly knew that he didn't have a reason in the world to arrest him, and that, although he'd thought for years of how he'd shoot Boney down like a dog, Afe just couldn't. His job was to uphold the law, not to break it.

Naturally it hit him hard. It practically knocked him out. So much so that, even though he'd caught up with Camp, he hadn't done a thing about it.

Afe lit another cigarette. Noonan would have to wait. He'd waited a lot of years and he could wait a few days longer. But Camp couldn't. Afe had spent two months looking for him. Camp had killed a sailor on board the merchant ship *Windsor,* been locked up and had escaped from the brig as his ship came into port.

It was Federal business because it was a crime committed on the high seas. Camp was an oiler who'd worked as a longshoreman, and they figured he'd go back to his old work. He'd have to, in time. So Afe had been combing the docks of the Atlantic ports looking for a thin-faced man by the name of Camp, and had caught up with him at last. And as soon as he walked out of the hotel, Afe would grab him, drop him in the nearest lock-up and apply for a leave of absence for personal business. He had to settle up with Noonan.

Afe could see the reflection of the light in the room where Camp and Noonan were talking about something. The light went off and then on again. Afe wondered what they were discussing. He tried to remember his impression of the pair as he'd walked into the room, but the shock of recognizing Noonan as the chipped Napoleon had driven all other thought out of his head.

About an hour later, Camp came out of the hotel, glanced up and down the street nervously and then hurried off. Afe followed, called, "Hey, you!" and watched Camp look as if he were deathly scared of something.

Afe said, "It's just me. The

guy that was up in the room before."

Camp glared suspiciously. "So? What do you want now?"

Afe walked up to him, took him by the arm and said, "Nothing much. Just to pick you up for that killing on the *Windsor*. I've been chasing you quite a while."

Camp gave a sort of shiver. "Oh," he said. "That's oke with me."

Afe started to frown. This was a new one, a prisoner who was going to be sent up for life saying it was O.K. with him. But before Afe could get his frown all the way finished, he felt Camp going sort of limp and leaning back against him.

Afe had one hand in his pocket, bringing out the bracelets. His other was still on Camp's arm, ready to twist it and send Camp reeling backwards if he tried to resist or pull a gun.

Camp didn't. A big shape rose up out of the alley and slapped at Afe. Camp began screaming as something slammed at Afe's skull and sent him skidding on his chin across the sidewalk. He lay there, dizzy and stunned and hearing the sharp thundering echo of shots. He smelt powder and tried to drag himself out of the way, to yank out his gun and roll toward the protection of the hydrant before opening fire.

He was slow because the blow and the fall had half paralyzed him and his muscles wouldn't work right. By the time Afe got to the hydrant and turned, Camp was lying there like an old rag and footsteps were pounding down the alley from which the attack had come.

Afe dropped to his knees and examined Camp.

He was done for. There were two holes in his back and one in his throat. His eyes rolled and he tried to push out words through the mutilated throat.

"Fell," he gasped. "Fell — he — get him — you — fe —" Then the blood came and drowned out the words, and that was all there was to it.

Afe made his report that night and said he was on the trail of an old killing and wanted to stay here and follow it up. He got permission, and the next morning he came down to the shape-up at the docks. To his surprise he got a job, in the same gang as Seattle.

Afe had worked as a longshoreman before, and he knew the tricks of the trade. How to lift with his legs instead of his back, keeping his legs bent and limber to ease the strain. How to swing the heavy stuff so that it was always in motion. How to keep a twelve-inch level while loading the hold, so that the loaded floor never varied by more than a foot at a time. How many small cases will pile level with the big ones. Little things, but things that marked him as a good worker in a fast gang.

He was working number three hatch, but it wasn't until lunch time that Seattle had a chance to talk to him.

"Know whose place you got in this gang?" remarked Seattle, as he munched on a sandwich. "Jim Camp's!"

Afe shrugged. "Somebody had to get it."

"Sure. But don't it strike you funny?"

Afe grabbed Seattle's arm. "What the hell do you mean by that?" he demanded.

Seattle shook loose angrily. "Nothing," he mumbled. "It's just funny, that's all."

"Maybe you're right, Seattle. Listen I barged into that room and Noonan jumped up sore. Then he started laughing and said he'd give me a job. So," said Afe slowly, "wouldn't it be funny if he meant to give me Camp's job all the time?"

Seattle looked around quickly. "I wouldn't say stuff like that down here. Afterwards we can have a beer together, huh?"

Afe got up. "Sure. You got ideas in your head, pal. I want to hear 'em."

All afternoon Afe thought about it. Camp had walked away from a conference with Noonan and been killed, and Camp must have known he was on the spot or he wouldn't have welcomed arrest. Noonan himself couldn't have done it because he'd still been upstairs at the time of the shooting, but Noonan might have arranged it. Afe remembered the light that had flashed off and then on again. A signal?

Afe began laughing at himself. His training in the F.B.I. had taught him what evidence was, and here he was building crazy theories on a chance remark and a light that had been switched off. He wanted to think Noonan was responsible for the murder because he wanted to get Noonan for something. For anything. And the trail of Spike Hamilton was too old to work on with any promise of success.

Fifteen years too old.

Swinging cases of canned fruit down in number three hold, Afe's blue eyes glowed like the eyes of a hungry animal, and when anyone spoke to him he answered in gruff, surly monosyllables. There were too many wild questions in his mind to give him any peace. But of all the wild questions, there was only one that he could answer with absolute certainty. Bill Noonan, who ran the rackets on the docks, was the Boney who'd killed Spike fifteen long years ago.

At a table in the back of a little bar, Seattle and Afe had their beer that evening. "Listen," said Seattle. "How much dough did you have coming from this guy Camp?"

"A hundred," replied Afe promptly.

"A hundred smackers, and

you offered me a lousy five-spot for finding the guy?"

"Sure. Just for telling me whether he was in town."

"Listen," purred Seattle. "How much would it be worth if you could still collect?"

"Collect from a stiff? You're crazy."

"How much do I get?" persisted Seattle.

Afe shrugged. "It's lost money to me now. It ought to be worth half."

"Maybe," said Seattle, still in that soft, intent voice, "somebody else would pay up. Maybe somebody else," he grinned, "would feel a kind of a moral obligation."

"Who?"

"The guy that bumped him!"

Afe burst out laughing. "Sure. He'd say, 'Killing's O.K., but if some guy lost a few bucks on account of it, I ought to take over the debt.' Listen, pal, forget about it."

"Maybe I don't just put it right. What I mean is, if we had the goods on him, he'd pay up. It wouldn't be blackmail, see? But he'd pay."

"Noonan?" asked Afe, and stared hard.

But Seattle pounded his glass on the table. "A couple more beers," he called out. And then, in a lower tone, "You got too many questions."

"I got one more," declared Afe. "When Camp passed out, he said, 'Fell — he — get him, you.' And then he died. What do you figure he was trying to say?"

Seattle shook his head. "Beyond me. And what's more, don't get the idea that I'm mixed up in this. I know Camp wanted to shake down Noonan on one of his big rackets. He had the dope on Noonan and thought he could cash in, but I don't know what it was all about. I'm just working on a hunch, because there's fifty bucks in it, and fifty bucks will feed me on a long trip home."

Afe didn't speak to Seattle again until noon the next day. They had been loading scrap iron all morning and their nerves were on edge. It was dangerous work at best, but on a rush job, with the tubs overloaded and not carefully balanced, it was nip and tuck for your life. A careless move on the part of the winchman as he lowered the tub, a miscalculation that might catch the tub on the corner of a hatch, and it would dump and hurl a ton of jagged iron onto the gang waiting below.

And added to that, there was risk from the speed with which the tub was unloaded and raised again, so that time and again a couple of pieces of iron were caught in the bottom of the tub and almost dumped over by the carelessness with which the supposedly empty bucket was raised.

At lunch time, then, there wasn't much talk except com-

plaints about the job. Noonan was working hell out of them and somebody suggested going out in a body and protesting, but nothing was done.

Seattle managed to say, "I seen him last night, Afe. And he's worried, too, or he'd have fired me off the job."

"Take it easy, pal. Why not let me handle it from here on?"

Seattle shook his head. "He'd bounce you out on your ear. I hung around with Camp, and so he's scared Camp talked. He didn't, really, but Noonan don't know that."

"Maybe Camp talked and maybe he didn't, but we're going to get together and dope out what Camp could have said. And if we make a good bluff, we'll get the dough and clear out of here."

"And maybe that's not a swell idea!" exclaimed Seattle.

If the morning was a nightmare, the afternoon was all the bad dreams come true. Noonan came down and tried to speed up the job even faster. He bawled out the foreman, bawled out the winchmen and got them into a state where they were almost praying for an accident to end it all.

The donkey engines were clattering, the ropes and booms were squeaking, the iron was clashing and hoarse voices yelled and cursed as if all the pandemonium of a war were let loose on this one freighter.

And then, while Afe was in a corner of the hold, he heard the heavy shivering thud of the bucket striking a hatch corner, heard the scraping of iron, and then there was a yell and a ton of old sheet metal and wheels and bars crashed and screamed down into the hold.

Afe felt the metal quiver under his feet. He turned white, and his heart and his pulses were hammering away like the broken pistons of an unoiled machine.

The death shriek of the man who had been caught under the avalanche, who'd had time for just one wild, agonized yell before he turned and tripped and drooped like a shadow—the death shriek still echoed in Afe's ears as he turned and stumbled forward to see who had been caught and squashed flat as an empty hide.

He didn't see Seattle in the little group that was working frantically, pulling at the twisted metal and hooking the big pieces to the rope that was dropped for the purpose. Afe caught snatches of conversation.

"Not a chance. Noonan himself working the winch. Told Pete he wasn't fast enough and so he took over. Hit the hatch corner there; you can see the dent."

Then Afe turned away as the battered body of the man emerged. It was Seattle all right. He'd been caught like an animal in a trap, without a chance. Just time for that wild death shriek, still

echoing in Afe's ears, and then it was all over.

Slowly and heavily Afe climbed up the ladder to the deck. He saw Noonan standing there amongst his men, explaining that it was an accident and couldn't be helped.

"Take him away," he ordered, "and get somebody else in this gang. We got to load this ship."

Afe just grunted and slogged forward, as if he were walking in water up to his knees. His eyes were blue and gold; blue for despair and gold for anger. The men stood aside until there was nobody between him and Noonan.

"Life," cracked out Afe, "is pretty damn cheap to you."

Noonan stiffened up suddenly. "Get back on the job!" he ordered.

"So you can kill off somebody else? Listen, you cheap murderer—"

Noonan hit him suddenly. Afe caught the blow squarely, rocked back off balance and landed heavily on the deck. Noonan's shoes were inches away.

Afe pulled himself up to his knees, his head hanging low, his arms tense, his breath coming in short quick gasps. He could get up there and beat the living hell out of Noonan, release anger on the hard crunching jabs of his fists. Or he could take it lying down, thinking of Spike and of Camp and of Seattle tying patience into a knot, and waiting, waiting. He could let it out now, put Noonan on guard and ruin all hope of getting the evidence he was after, or he could take it and let Noonan think he was scared and not worth bothering about.

That was the thing to do—he had to be caught off guard.

Noonan said, "You yellow-bellied rat!" Then Noonan's shoes turned and tramped off.

Afe got up slowly and shook his head. The sun was bright on the harbor water, and the booms at the other hatches were swinging scrap iron from the flat cars and dropping it in the holds, each load a quick glimpse of sudden death for the men working down below.

Afe turned and trudged dully toward the gangplank, on to the wharf and then threaded his way through the stacked cargo in the warehouses.

Outside, he stood still and looked up at the sky. It was almost a sacred mission to put Noonan where he belonged, and there were plenty of crimes of which he must be guilty. The only lack was —proof.

Then started the search for proof—the old game of questions.

There was no longer any work for Afe Madison, but he didn't need it or want it. His single aim in life was to get enough evidence against Noonan to charge him with a major crime. Afe spent most of his time in the saloons, asking questions about Noonan,

getting his history, his background, all the unsavory details and grudges of his life. And all they added up to was rumor.

Changing his tactics then, Afe began tailing Noonan, and still there was nothing. You can't follow a man all day every day without his knowing it, and that was the one thing Afe wanted to avoid. He found the two or three places where Noonan went most frequently, and Afe waited for him there. And so one night Afe glided along the shadows of the waterfront buildings and watched Noonan head for the deserted docks.

Several times Afe was on the point of yelling to the barrel-chested racketeer and having it out with him. But that wasn't the way. So Afe bit his lips and stepped lightly on oiled shoe leather that didn't make any noise, and Noonan reached the street bounding the waterfront, and headed for a wharf at which a big freighter was docked.

At the dock where Noonan had gone, Afe, who had followed him, looked around the corner. Vaguely he could see two figures, and he could hear the low sound of voices. Then a heavy, measured footstep approached and Afe flattened himself against the wall.

A few seconds later a watchman tramped through the entrance. One hand was in his pocket and he was humming softly to himself. He headed for an all-night coffee place near the end of the street.

Afe slipped inside the big shed of the wharf. Further down, he could see the black hull and a strip of white superstructure of a cargo boat. A girder-like gangway connected her with the shore. He tried to make out the name, but it was too dark and the angle was bad.

He was abreast of the name plate of the ship, the *Phedra,* when the two men started down the gangway. Afe dropped behind a big packing case and watched. The first man was Noonan, and his companion was a tall broad seaman wearing a captain's uniform. Both of them were carrying suitcases.

As the pair reached the packing case behind which Afe was crouched, he stepped forward suddenly, gun leveled, eyes narrowed, burning. The two men stopped abruptly. The captain stood there with the bag still in his hand, his mouth open, his eyes astonished. Noonan dropped his bag suddenly and stepped forward.

"What are you after?" he rasped.

Afe smiled thinly, took out his Federal badge and said, "What do *you* think?"

"I think it's a damned outrage!" blustered Noonan. "Here we go ashore for the night, Captain Phelps and myself, and—"

Afe didn't listen any more. He didn't have to. Phelps—fell. *"Get Phelps!"* That's what Camp had tried to say with his dying breath, choking the words through his mutilated throat. And this was the racket that Camp had tried to muscle in on, and for which he had been killed. A sudden flash of happiness surged through Afe because he felt that now, for the first time, he was on the right track.

"Come on!" he snapped. "We're going back on board. And if either of you tries anything—" Afe just waved the gun, grinned recklessly and with his old confident abandon. "Let's go!"

As they reached the head of the gangway, Afe said, "Take the bags to your cabin, Captain, and then leave me there with Noonan. We have a few things to talk about. Noonan's the man I'm after, and if you leave us alone you'll be glad of it. You lost your master's license when you stepped off this ship with that bag in your hand, but you don't look as if you'd been in this racket too long and there's such a thing as leniency. For you, but not for Noonan. The score's too big with him."

Phelps led the way up a companion and to a small deck under the bridge. He unlocked a door and ushered them into a large, comfortably furnished cabin. His face was red and his voice quivered when he spoke. "I've been a fool. Listen, if you can fix it—"

"I can't promise anything," declared Afe, "but I'll try. Now get out!"

From the corner of his eye he watched Phelps turn and go dejectedly from the room. But Afe's glance was on Noonan.

As soon as Phelps had gone, Afe walked up to Noonan, frisked him, then turned to the door, locked it and dropped key and gun in his pocket. "All right," he said. "Open those bags."

"Open 'em yourself," snarled Noonan. "You won't find nothin'."

"That's why you're so anxious to open them," said Afe drily. "Listen, Noonan. I've been in this town a week and I've seen you kill two men."

"Prove it."

"I can prove it all right. I can prove you killed Seattle by the winchman and by everybody else on the job. They won't be so scared of you when they see you in the prisoner's dock, but you know why I didn't do anything about that?"

"You couldn't prove a thing!" snapped Noonan. "Otherwise you wouldn't have waited."

Afe shook his head. "You're wrong, Noonan. Because that would be negligent homicide, and the term isn't long enough. That's why I didn't do anything. And the reason I didn't get you

for the Camp killing is the same. They can only give you life in this state!"

Afe was bluffing, but he saw that his shots went home and that Noonan was wondering which of his other crimes was finally coming home to him.

"Remember," said Afe softly, "a man by the name of Spike Madison? You shot him in New York State, and you get the chair for murder in New York!"

"Never heard of no one by that name."

"Spike Madison," repeated Afe in a soft, breathless voice. "He was the Federal agent who tried to arrest you in Syracuse, fifteen years ago. Remember now? He was my brother. Back up!"

Noonan backed slowly towards the bunk. Afe watched him, then bent down and snapped the catch of the first bag. Heroin.

He sighed. Noonan's hand was touching the pillow, his fingers were sliding underneath it. Afe grunted.

"So that was your brother," Noonan said. "Well, I got him, and I got Camp for threatening to tell the narcotic squad if I didn't let him cut in on this. And I got Seattle in front of a dozen witnesses. I waited till he was under the bucket there and then I made a mistake and there was an accident. So you can call that one murder, too. But there's one thing you'll never have the chance to charge me with, and that's your own murder!"

"That's right," said Afe. For a half second, he looked away. Noonan grabbed for the gun under the pillow, and then Afe shot him. Noonan doubled up like a diver doing the jack-knife. He hit the floor on his head, balanced for a fraction of a second and then flopped over.

Afe pulled himself to his feet. His shoulder burned and there was blood on his coat, but nobody in the world, he told himself, could fake a fall such as Noonan had taken. But just to play safe, Afe went over and pulled the revolver out of the fingers.

Then he stared downward, at the broken nose that bore such a strange resemblance to the chipped Napoleon on the Madison mantelpiece fifteen years ago.

death beside the pyramids

by . . . Sir Philip Gibbs

He was jealous, with the sick jealousy of an older man, as he watched the two of them, his wife and young Leonard March.

WE WERE just a party of tourists—English and American—who had slipped away from our fellow travellers in Cairo to spend a day and a night in the Egyptian desert. I for one had come on this Mediterranean cruise, joining the boat at Monaco, merely as an escape from an English winter, and I was not prepared to find tragedy or melodrama as part of the programme arranged by Messrs. Cook & Son, who provided camels, dragomans, Nile boats, and tickets to Tutankhamen's tomb for their well-to-do clients. But I was aware that something like tragedy—a drama of passion—was being played secretly in our party of seven behind the masks which men and women use to hide their souls.

Outwardly there was no sign of it. I remember that we were all laughing and chattering when Mustapha, our dragoman, came from the direction of the kitchen tent, bowed to us with grave dignity, and made a solemn announcement.

"The midday meal is about to be served. My Nubian cook has

Sir Philip Gibbs, distinguished British novelist, journalist and war correspondent, editor at 21 with Cassell, the London publishers, is perhaps better known in this country for novels such as YOUNG ANARCHY *(1926) and* THE CROSS OF PEACE *(1933), and his books on today's Europe.*

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desired to please you. May Allah give you good appetite."

"God bless the Nubian cook!" cried Lady Ladbrook, powdering her nose from a little handbag. "I find that camel exercise is a great aid to digestion, though somewhat violent."

She was a pretty lady who looked out of place in the Egyptian desert in her short frock and silk stockings of which she had shown too much perhaps when bestriding her camel, though her driver, with Mohammedan modesty, had turned his eyes when she mounted and dismounted with little shrieks of laughter. I had known her in London and had not been too pleased to see her when she came on board with Major Eland and Evelyn, his wife. She was a lady with a mischievous tongue.

It was Major Eland who answered her now after looking across the sandhills for any sign of his wife who had strolled off from the camp with young Leonard March, the Egyptologist, while our meal was being prepared.

"We should have done far better to stay at Shepheard's instead of mucking about in this blighted desert."

He spoke with an angry violence, too loudly, I thought, seeing the deep flush which crept under the dark skin of Mustapha, who was doing his best to cater for our needs and doing it extraordinarily well, besides having a dignity of manner which put some of us to shame.

It was not the first time that Major Eland had offended this young dragoman who had taken us about Cairo into the native quarters and the great mosques and shown us the tombs at Memphis and the fallen statue of Rameses. He had been recommended to us by Leonard March, who had been into the desert with him many times as far as Fayoum and had a great admiration for his honesty and fine character.

"A good type of Egyptian, and highly intelligent," young March had told us. "I like to think that he is descended from one of the Egyptian kings of the early dynasties! That hawk-like profile of his . . ."

Perhaps that was why Major Eland seemed to take a dislike to him from the start. I could not help noticing that anyone or anything recommended by young March put his back up instantly. And in this case he objected very strongly, and rather brutally, to his wife's "familiarity" (as he called it) with this "damned nigger"—meaning this dragoman of ours. Mustapha had overheard that phrase "damned nigger" and I had seen the quickly veiled look of hatred and contempt in his dark liquid eyes.

Eland was one of those middle-aged, golf-playing, unimaginative Englishmen who had done a little soldiering in India before the

Great War in which he had served with distinction as a gunner, and had all the intolerance for the dark-skinned races which belongs to that type of mind. But it seemed to me a great pity that he could not put a guard on his tongue in Egypt and, in any case, behave with common civility before his wife—that charming and beautiful girl, so much younger than himself, who was fascinated by this first glimpse of the romantic East.

From the time we had landed at Alexandria, Eland had been irritated and bad-tempered, expressing his hatred of the heat, the beggars, the bazaars, the mummies in the museum, and what he called "the whole bag of tricks." He had behaved like a churl, sometimes distressing Evelyn very much as I could see, and then regretting his rudeness and trying to make amends by rather heavy-going endearments and expensive presents—he had paid fifty pounds for an alabaster statuette of an Egyptian god who was Horus, the son of Osiris—with a clumsy attempt at good humor. I suspected him sometimes of drinking too much.

"I detest flies in my food," he said now. "And I can't see the fun of play-acting in the desert when we could be perfectly comfortable in a good hotel."

"But think of all this romance you would miss, Major!" exclaimed Mrs. Caroline K. Lymposs, who had come from Greenwich, Connecticut, with the intention of seeing a real live sheikh before she died. She had seen one that very morning—at Mena village, near the great pyramid, and been gravely disappointed with his unromantic appearance as he sat in the dust outside a mud hut muttering his prayers. She had taken his photograph as one more record of disillusion which had made her doubt the veracity of all "best sellers." She was one of those elderly American ladies who escape at times from the younger married set and travel ruthlessly with good-natured husbands who tire before the journey's end and shudder at the name of another picture gallery. Mr. Lymposs had tired somewhere in Venice but he liked this desert interlude where there was not a picture gallery in sight and was quite happy in his shirt sleeves, and in the shadow of his tent, doing some good work with a cocktail shaker.

Major Eland ignored that suggestion of romance. He was scanning the desert again, that billowy wave of sand shimmering under the midday sun which hid the distant beauty of Cairo, with its white walls and minarets fifteen miles distant, I suppose, from where we camped.

"Where the devil is Evelyn?" he asked peevishly. "It's like that fellow's infernal impudence to wander off with her like that."

Lady Ladbrook gave a little musical laugh.

"They haven't wandered far, Mr. Bluebeard. Dear Evelyn is frightfully keen on Egyptology and she has a very charming guide with her! . . . Here they are, called back by nature's clock, which is a hungry tummy."

Evelyn waved her hand from the top of the sandhill and called "coo-ee!" She was in a white frock with a scarf of white and gold embroidered with Egyptian hieroglyphics—bought in the bazaar at Cairo—tied about her hair, and she looked very young and slim standing there against the cloudless blue of the Egyptian sky. Young March was close beside her, bronzed almost to the color of an Arab, with his white silk shirt open at the neck and tucked up to his elbows. They came running down the slope together, hand in hand, like schoolfellows, as they had once been in an English village, and Evelyn was excited when she joined our group.

"Look!" she cried. "See what we found in the sand. One just walks on history. All the past lies beneath our feet!"

She had found half a dozen mummy heads, and a Roman coin, and a little scarab.

"Look, Dick!" she said, holding them out to her husband. "Isn't that extraordinary luck? We were sitting down in the sand and I wasn't even looking for anything when I saw this scarab gleaming white, close to my foot. Leonard says it's the signet of Thotmes II. Sa Ra—son of the Sun—and the sacred beetle."

"It's probably a fake," said Major Eland. "They all are. And anyhow, isn't it time we had something to eat?"

"Not a bad idea. And I expect Mustapha has prepared a pretty good meal. . . . But it's not a fake. That scarab, I mean. It was really very lucky that Evelyn should have spotted it. It's probably been lying there for three thousand years or so. Of course the wind shifts the sand and uncovers these things."

"I would like to stay here for six months," said Evelyn. "Egypt has captured my little white soul. Modern civilization slips away from one out here in the desert."

"That's why I dislike it," answered her husband, gruffly.

"One feels—liberated, spiritualized," said Evelyn, looking across the desert. "It seems absurd to go back to London with all its vulgarities and the smell of petrol, and the noise of motor buses roaring round Piccadilly!"

"Well, speaking for myself," said Mr. Lymposs, "I prefer Connecticut to Cairo. I miss my shower bath and the comforts of modern civilization. . . . Still, one can do a lot with a cocktail shaker. . . . Major, try this little pick-me-up. It's good."

Mustapha had arranged a table and chairs outside our row of white tents, five of them, with

camp beds inside and neat little washstands, and cheap rugs highly decorated with figures copied from Egyptian mummy cases as I had seen them being made in the bazaars. A hundred yards away was the kitchen tent and beyond that lay our camels, snuffling beside them after the morning's ride from Mena village. No other living thing was in sight. We were alone in the desert with the interminable sand stretching around us in long restful waves under the deep blue dome, and with a shimmer of heat which dazzled one's eyes, so that I for one had to put on colored glasses. Ten miles away faintly pencilled above the horizon was a line of pyramids at Sakkara, immense and ghostly, reminding us of our brevity of life and the long stretch of history that lay between our shadows and that world-old civilization which had raised those stones.

Mustapha's Nubian cook had come out of his tent, with two assistants, to wait upon us with the banquet they had prepared. They were in white with red sashes and red slippers, and were exactly like their ancestors who had been the slaves of Rameses and all the Pharaohs. Mustapha himself looked like one of those young Pharaohs, I thought, as he stood proudly aloof from these serving men after a few directions to them, standing motionless with his arms folded in a brown sleeveless tunic above his white robe.

Mrs. Lymposs took a moving picture of us on her "baby" cinematograph while her husband spoiled the sense of romance a little by making a pantomime with a bottle of beer and a sandwich. Lady Ladbrook powdered her nose again between the courses and fixed a sunshade to shield her complexion. No hint of tragedy, one would say. No touch of melodrama.

And yet I was quite uneasy and watchful. There was some dark passion at work in the mind of Major Eland. I glanced at him now and then and saw how grim and silent he sat at this table in the desert, and how once or twice he raised eyes to that young wife of his with a searching, brooding look as though he had some frightful doubt about her. She was sitting next to young March, and they were talking about the early civilization of Egypt, and the belief in the immortality of the soul which was revealed in the Book of the Dead.

"The *Ka* is the soul as we think of it," said Leonard March. "But they believed in a kind of bodily survival, a physical immortality subject to all human needs. That's why they placed food in the tombs and the models of those *ushabti* representing the servants who had waited upon them in life. It seems certain now that in very early times—10,000 B.C. perhaps—they actually sacrificed their slaves and servants so that they should

not be unattended on the other side."

"How awful!" said Evelyn.

She gave a little shudder and then laughed.

"Perhaps the slaves liked it, poor dears, and felt rather proud of being sacrificed for their lord and master. . . . But, Leonard, tell me about that tomb you opened. It must have been terribly thrilling to be the first to go into the chamber after six thousand years."

"It was the tomb of a princess," said young March. "Her hair was like yours—almost as fair—and perfectly preserved until at the first breath of air it dissolved into dust."

He smiled and looked shyly at Evelyn's hair under her white scarf and with a kind of pity that one day it would dissolve also into dust. Then I think he was conscious that Major Eland was looking at him across the table. Very charmingly and courteously this bronzed young man raised his glass of white wine and said, "*Allahu Akhbar!* . . . Good health, Major."

It was done in the friendliest way, and I am certain now, as I was then, that Leonard March was perfectly loyal to Evelyn's husband and had no guilty love (though certainly love and admiration) for this young married woman who had come into his life again after their boy and girl friendship and was now hanging onto his words because of his knowledge and comradeship.

"Tell me, Mr. March," said Mrs. Lymposs of Greenwich, Connecticut.

I forget what question that lady asked. I was watching Eland. When March had raised his glass and drunk his health he flushed deeply and took his own glass with a fumbling hand. Now when young March's attention was turned to Mrs. Lymposs the major flung his wine into the sand with a gesture of uncontrollable rage. For a moment or two he breathed jerkily and glanced round to see if anyone had noticed his action with that wine glass.

There were two of us who had noticed it—Lady Ladbrook, who gave me a quick malicious little smile, and myself. But we avoided the major's eyes and pretended to be busy with our food.

The man was mad with jealousy, and I cannot acquit Lady Ladbrook of guilt in having stirred it up and played the female Iago with this Othello in plus-fours. Sometimes I suspected her of having the instincts of a "vamp," for on the voyage out from Monaco she had fastened herself onto Major Eland and had tried to captivate him by her pretty feline ways, annoying him considerably, as I knew (once in my cabin he had called her "that detestable woman"), and utterly failing to allure

him. Then she had amused herself, and perhaps avenged herself, by exciting his jealousy against young March. I remember some of her malicious little phrases which I had overheard from time to time as I passed them on deck, during those wonderful evenings when we crept down the Mediterranean through the Greek islands with flame-colored feathers in the sky, above lakes of gold, and a blue unruffled sea below our keel and magic effects of light and color and old memories of Greek beauty and history which, surely to God, should have raised one's soul above the petty malice of life. But Lady Ladbrook babbled on.

"Young Mr. March is about the same age as your wife, isn't he? . . . How pleasant for her to meet such a charming boy again! . . . She's such a romantic darling and so desperately interested in Egyptology . . . You will have to be careful, Major! . . . Perhaps your golf stories are not quite so thrilling as tales of Egyptian tombs. . . . Do you think it's quite discreet of you to let Evelyn go into Mr. March's cabin to look at his scarabs and things? Of course I know it's perfectly all right, but people do talk, don't they? All these Americans. . . ."

Those were not her exact words but that was the kind of thing she said in her high laughing voice which floated down the deck on this Mediterranean cruise. And at first Major Eland pooh-poohed her hints and veiled suggestions.

"Evelyn makes her own friends," he said. "Young March is a nice boy. They come from the same place in Sussex. His father was a parson. . . . Do you mind if I smoke a cigar?"

That at least was how he answered her once when I was leaning over the side of the boat, quite close to them, watching the patterns in the water made by our wake, and wishing that Lady Ladbrook would not break the enchantment of all this loveliness by her ceaseless prattle.

And yet her words must have put hideous ideas into the man's mind and called up sinister suspicions from that dark underworld of the subconscious mind. He was twenty years older than Evelyn, though not more than forty-five, and perhaps that difference of age had begun to haunt him as a danger that might make a fool of him one day. Something must have shaken his own self-confidence, his faith in Evelyn's loyalty—some touch of insanity which occasionally leaps into a man's brain and makes him utterly unreasonable on some particular point, though perfectly sane and balanced otherwise. A "complex," to use the modern jargon.

The first time I had become aware of it was one night when we were nearing Alexandria. We had been dancing under an awning on B deck and certainly Eve-

lyn had danced rather frequently with Leonard March, thereby causing Lady Ladbrook to make one of her "catty" little comments.

"Inseparable, those two dears! Egyptology is such a link between them. Our beautiful Evelyn looks quite mystical tonight."

I don't know about looking mystical, but she was looking beautiful—so fresh and slim and graceful—in a white frock with a rope of pearls about her throat and a chain of smaller pearls twined about her hair. She danced charmingly with young March, who had been giving us a lecture that night on Egyptian civilization in the early Dynasties—wonderfully vivid and interesting.

Presently as they passed, and the music ceased for a moment, I heard her speak to her partner.

"Isn't it rather hot here, Lenny? Let's go onto the boat deck and get a little air."

"A good idea," he said. "The stars are out."

They made their way through the dancers and went into the darkness beyond the awning. And then suddenly I saw Eland's face. He was sitting in a deck chair near the orchestra and there was a look in his eyes that startled me. It was the look of a man stricken with some frightful doubt, even with some horrible fear. He rose slowly from his low chair and came along the edge of the deck on the cabin side, shouldering past some of the dancers, careless of good manners. I don't think he was aware of his rudeness or of anything except that fixed idea of his. I am almost sure he had been drinking, for I smelled his whiskey-laden breath as he passed, but I was startled by his loud breathing.

"Major!" said Lady Ladbrook.

He did not hear her but strode out beyond the awning to that darkness into which his wife and Leonard March had disappeared.

"It is rather hot in here," said Lady Ladbrook, lightly. "Let's go up to the boat deck and take the air."

She put her hand on my sleeve and I confess that I yielded to the temptation of following Eland, not from mere idle curiosity but with a kind of feeling that I might be wanted—at Leonard March's side.

It was of course quite dark on the boat deck except for the luminous night over the Mediterranean and the faint light of stars. The air was wonderfully warm and there was a smell of scrubbed decks and tar which always thrills my senses with, perhaps, some racial memories of sea adventures or some childish association of ideas.

"A lovely night!" I said, but Lady Ladbrook put her hand in my arm again and whispered:

"Hush! Don't talk. It's too beautiful!"

I could not see Eland, but there

standing against one of the boats were Evelyn and Leonard March. Evelyn's face was raised a little towards the stars, and I heard her speak.

"I shall never forget this beauty, Lenny. When I'm back in South Kensington it will seem like a dream of some other life, with you by my side."

Innocent words that might be spoken by any girl to any man on a night like this under the stars. But Lady Ladbrook gave my arm a tighter grip.

Young March answered cheerily and without undue sentiment, though with sufficient gallantry and tenderness.

"It's a pity the voyage is so short. I can't imagine anything more enchanting than to go travelling with you forever like this. But I hope I don't bore you too much with my enthusiasm for mummies and things!"

He laughed in his shy way and we did not hear Evelyn's answer though I saw her take hold of his hand as though protesting against the idea of being bored. Deliberately I made some commonplace remark to Lady Ladbrook so that we should not be eavesdroppers. At the same time I saw Eland come out from behind one of the boats. He approached stealthily, in a pantherine way, and his eyes glowed in the darkness. But at the sound of my voice he stood still and then straightened himself up.

"Is that you, Major?" asked Lady Ladbrook. "Too hot below, don't you think? These young people were wise to come up here!"

"You think so?" he answered huskily. A moment later he lit a cigar with an unsteady hand and the flame of his match showed the pallor of his face.

"Hullo, all you people!" cried Evelyn. "So you have found out our little sanctuary, have you? This deck is becoming too popular."

There was not a tremor in her voice to suggest that she had been love-making or was afraid of being found here. It was the frank and laughing voice of a girl who had nothing to conceal. But Eland spoke to his wife roughly —almost brutally.

"Come down and join the crowd," he said. "I don't like you slinking up here in the darkness. Besides"—his voice softened a little as though he were ashamed already of his ill temper—"you'll catch cold."

"Oh, no!" said Evelyn. "It's perfectly warm—and I don't like that word 'slinking,' Dick! It's not quite nice, is it?"

He mumbled some kind of apology and presently we all went down and danced again. Or rather I danced with Evelyn and Lady Ladbrook with Mr. Lymposs, the American, who was much taken with her. Eland sat apart again smoking his cigar

moodily and drinking whiskey. As Lady Ladbrook passed me in her partner's arms she glanced sideways at him and then winked at me with a roguish smile as though to say "Drama aboard!" But I failed to see the humor of it because I had seen something beyond a joke in the agony and suspicion of a human soul who was beginning to doubt his wife's fidelity and her friendship with a younger man.

That was why now, in the desert, I was uneasy. The very innocence of Evelyn Eland and the simplicity and good-nature of Leonard March made them behave in a way that might be twisted to sinister meanings by a mind in which the poison of jealousy was working hideously.

We lingered over the desert meal which was quite a banquet, ending miraculously with Christmas plum pudding—that cook was a genius—lighted with brandy. It was absurd, really, in the hot sunshine, but amusing in its contrast of modern ways with the sense of immemorial age around us in view of those distant pyramids which had looked down upon the beginning of civilization. We had arranged to take a siesta in the afternoon and then in the evening to mount our camels again and ride in the moonlight to see, close at hand, the pyramids of Sakkara, and possibly go down into a tomb which had been recently excavated by a group of English archaeologists. At least that was the program proposed by Leonard March after consultation with Mustapha and agreed to with enthusiasm by Evelyn and Lady Ladbrook, and indeed all of us except Major Eland, who seemed to detest the idea. He said something about "those stinking camels" and the danger of catching a chill in the night air. Besides, he said, he was utterly "fed up" with pyramids and tombs and mummies. This worship of the ancient Egyptians seemed to him unhealthy and gave him the creeps.

Evelyn laughed at him good-naturedly, but there was a sudden challenge in her eyes when he said: "I don't wish you to go, Evelyn."

"Oh, but I'm going!" she said. "I wouldn't miss that moonlight ride for anything. It's going to be wonderful, especially as Lenny is going to show us that tomb."

"I ask you not to go," said the major breathing heavily again.

"My dear old Dick," cried Evelyn. "I don't know what's happened to you lately. Have you lost your sense of humor or something?"

"Yes," he answered rather slowly. "I've lost my sense of humor. There are some things beyond humor."

"I'm afraid I don't understand you," said Evelyn, looking bewildered and for a moment, I

thought, just a little alarmed because of her husband's strange mood. Mrs. Lymposs came to the rescue and eased a painful situation by some comical remark which made us all laugh—except the major. But half an hour later something else happened which was even more painful. It was caused or at least connected with the statuette of that Egyptian god —Horus, the son of Osiris— which Eland had bought for his wife in an antique shop not far from Shepheard's hotel. Evelyn had brought it with her as a mascot and had propped it up on the table as a kind of presiding deity at our feast. It was Mrs. Lymposs who drew our attention to the likeness of Mustapha to this falcon-headed figure, and then we thought no more about it until Eland made a fool of himself by his bad temper again.

Perhaps he had some justification. I want to be fair to him. Looking back on the whole episode I think Evelyn and Leonard March were a little careless of his feelings and too absorbed in each other because of their interest in Egyptology and this romance of the desert. I am even prepared to admit—though I am not one of Evelyn's slanderers—that this young married woman with a middle-aged husband was touched unconsciously by a romantic hero worship for this good-looking young man whom she had met again after her girlhood friendship with him, and that unknown to herself she was drawn towards him by the ordinary pull of nature—youth to youth—or by some spiritual affinity. There was something in her eyes when she looked at him that went beyond an interest in Egyptology, a softness, a shining, glamorous look which would have made me jealous if I had been her husband. She sat there with her pretty chin cupped in her hands, and her elbows on the table, and a smile playing about her lips as Leonard March drew little pictures on a piece of paper, teaching her the Egyptian alphabet and the figures of the gods.

Mustapha, who made a frugal meal of dates while we had been overeating, drew near respectfully and stood there like a statue, with only his eyes moving as he followed the working of March's quick pencil drawing those gods who had been feared and worshipped by this man's race and still had power perhaps over their minds in spite of their Mohammedan faith. I could see that the dragoman was astounded by such knowledge of ancient things with which he also was familiar as a guide to the old tombs.

There were only four of us at table now. Mr. Lymposs had gone to sleep in his tent. Lady Ladbrook had retired to look after her complexion and read a naughty French novel. Mrs. Lymposs, indefatigable, was taking a moving picture

of the camel drivers and Nubian cooks.

Major Eland was smoking a cigar, staring moodily at those shadowy pyramids on the far horizon, and now and then glancing furtively at his wife. As she leaned forward to look at March's sketches her hair nearly touched the young man's forehead. Once she looked into his eyes and said: "How do you remember so much?"

He explained the origin of the Egyptian alphabet—the O from the gourd, the S from the hiss of a snake, the Tsch from the noise of the wind through the bulrushes on the Nile. He told of the Egyptian "Words of Power" and pretended that he would be afraid to speak one of them aloud in one of the tombs.

"They knew more than we understand," he said rather solemnly. "I honestly believe they had occult powers which we have lost. Modern Spiritualism is simply a debased form of their old magic. I'm convinced that we are surrounded by the spirits of the dead and that there are great powers around us."

It was then that Major Eland lost his temper. Perhaps it was because of that look on his wife's face, that glamorous shining look as she smiled at Leonard March.

"Look here, March," he said. "I'm tired of all this blasphemous nonsense. You both seem to have gone silly about this Egyptology. We're Christians, aren't we? Why should we rake up all this stuff about gods and devils in this filthy country? Tutankhamen and all that rot seemed to have created a new form of insanity, subsidized by Cook & Sons. Curse the Egyptian gods!"

He flung out his hand with an angry gesture and by accident, I think, struck the figure of Horus standing on the trestle table. His signet ring must have hit it sharply, for it cracked and split in two before falling off the table, where it lay in the sand.

The extreme violence with which he had spoken caused Evelyn to lose all her color so that her face was dead white, and I noticed a sudden alarm leap into the eyes of Leonard March. I think for the first time he had any awareness of Eland's hatred of him and guessed the cause of it with a sudden blinding revelation. He sprang from his chair and his bronzed face reddened with anger and embarrassment.

But it was Mustapha, the dragoman of Cairo, who made an excited demonstration. At the breaking of the Egyptian god he gave a loud cry of horror. For a moment he hid his face in the sleeves of his brown tunic. Then he flung up his hands to the blue sky above him with a kind of wailing cry. A moment later he turned with an absolute fury in his eyes to Major Eland, speaking at first

in Arabic and then in broken English:

"*Inshallah!* It is wicked what you do. . . . Allah have mercy upon you. . . . Ever since you come to Egypt you insult my race and pride. . . . You treat me like dog and slave. . . . You call me 'damn nigger,' though I come down from the great Pharaohs who ruled all the world when your people were beastlike and unknown. You mock at the mummies of our kings. . . . You laugh in the silence of the tombs. *Mâshallah!* You are without dignity or noble manners. . . . Now you curse the old gods and break the figure of the great Horus. . . . I am afraid. Before we get back to Cairo something may happen that will tell us of the power of the gods. Allah is great. There is only one God and Mohammed is his prophet. But the old gods inhabit the spirit world.

"It is not good to insult them. I am afraid. I am disgraced. I will no longer be dragoman in Cairo."

Major Eland sprang to his feet, furious with anger.

"Stop this ridiculous noise," he shouted sternly. "Go to your tent with those filthy cooks of yours. I am an officer in the British Army. You had better hold your tongue."

Mustapha shot a look of hatred at him. His dark skin had paled at that command to go to his "filthy cooks." He moistened his lips with his tongue and put both hands up to his throat as though such insults choked him.

"I am here in my own country," he said harshly. "I have command over men and camels. My father is a sheikh of Fayoum. *Mâshallah!* I fling back your words. I call down the curse of the old gods."

He came close to Major Eland and then staggered as the major struck him heavily in the chest and said, "Stand back."

"Dick!" said Evelyn in a low frightened voice. "For heaven's sake! Have you been drinking or something?"

She turned quickly and spoke to the dragoman.

"My husband is not well. It is the heat of the sun. Please excuse him, Mustapha. We are so much obliged to you, so grateful for all your care of us, and everything. It has been such a beautiful memory for all of us, and we owe you many thanks."

I saw the man's eyes soften as he looked at Evelyn. Her beauty and her graciousness appealed to his sense of chivalry.

He touched his forehead and his chest with the Mohammedan salute and bowed to her.

"For some people and you, my lady, it is a joy to do any service. May Allah make you happy and smile upon your days."

Then he turned and with great dignity walked away from us to his own tent which was separate from the others.

"Dick!" said Evelyn, and I saw there were tears in her eyes. "Why did you lose your temper like that? Why have you been so strange ever since we came to Egypt? Are you ill, or anything?"

"Perhaps I am ill," he said. And indeed he looked ill and passed his hand over his forehead. "Come into our tent, Evelyn, I have something to say to you."

She put her hand on his arm and followed him into the tent while March and I stood looking at each other somberly.

"What do you make of it?" asked March in a low voice. "Has he gone mad or something?"

I shrugged my shoulders and smiled nervously.

"Beware of the green-eyed monster, my dear lad," I said, and left it at that.

March stood there with a look of confusion and alarm.

"Good God!" he exclaimed. "What absolute rot!"

He strode off into the desert to worry this thing out in solitude, and I saw his lithe figure stand for a few moments on the sand dune which hid our view of Cairo over there, like a mirage, fifteen miles away. Then he disappeared down the slope beyond.

The Elands' tent had its flap lowered. I could hear the murmur of their voices and once the major's voice raised angrily and harshly, though I could not hear the words he spoke. Mrs. Lymposs came back from a reconnaissance with her cinematograph and laughed good-humoredly to find her husband awakened from his siesta and sitting in Lady Ladbrook's tent in his shirt sleeves, having an elderly flirtation with that *houri* who was reclining on her truckle bed as though it were an Eastern divan.

"Come in, mother!" cried Mr. Lymposs. "Lady Ladbrook and I are discussing life with a big L. I'm learning something!"

"A good deal too much, I daresay," replied Mrs. Lymposs, but she accepted the invitation and presently provided tea from a thermos flask.

It was half an hour later when to my great relief Evelyn Eland came to join us. I am certain she had been weeping, but none of the others seemed to notice her pallor and that trace of tears beneath her eyes. She hid her distress and spoke quite calmly.

"Dick doesn't feel very well. I expect it's the sun. He won't come with us for that camel ride by moonlight."

"Poor dear man!" said Mrs. Lymposs. "I wonder if he would take a little remedy I know for headaches. It's certainly harmless and most helpful, I find."

She routed about in the handbag she always carried stuffed with picture postcards and manicure things and all sorts of odds and ends for traveling use, until she

found a little bottle of white tablets.

"Who will take him that, with my love?" she asked.

It was I who volunteered, and Evelyn said, "Thanks so much."

It was only a few yards to Eland's tent and I held the flap and said, "May I come in?"

"Who is it?" he asked sharply, and then said, "Come in," when I said my name.

He was standing there stiffly, with one hand behind his back, and did not seem too pleased to see me. But he smiled slightly when I told him my errand, and said, "It's very kind of her I'm sure," and took the little bottle, still with his other hand behind his back.

"May I sit down and smoke a cigarette?" I asked. "If it doesn't bore you."

"Do," he replied. "By all means."

As he turned to make way for me I saw what he held in that hand behind his back. It was an army revolver, and I'm bound to say I didn't like the look of it. I think he guessed that I had seen it, because he laughed and showed it to me.

"I brought this in case of jackals or Bedouins. You never know whether it might not be useful in the desert. Don't you agree?"

I didn't agree.

"Personally I never carry things like that," I said. "They're rather dangerous—if they happen to go off."

He laughed again.

"Not if you know how to use them. I thought I'd do some target practice when you go off on that ridiculous ride. Nothing on earth is going to make me get on one of those camels again."

I felt a cold shiver run up my spine. The frightful conviction came to me that he intended to shoot young March sometime that night—or Evelyn—or both of them. The man was daft with jealousy. If March didn't keep out of his way . . . What on earth could I do about it? Here we were alone in the desert with a man who had murder in his heart.

Strangely enough he began to speak frankly about his wife and his own ill temper.

"I made rather a fool of myself this afternoon. Too much whiskey, I suppose. Evelyn and I had a bit of a tiff—about that dragoman. I'm a bit of a brute, really. It's the effect of the war. It shook my nerves to pieces. In any case, I'm getting old—too old for a young wife who wants to have a good time. A damn nuisance, the creeping on of age and the nerve storms of approaching senility!"

"Good lord!" I said. "You're in the prime of life, my dear man."

He shook his head and laughed dejectedly.

"That rotten war aged me. Took

the stuffing out of me. I'm still shell-shocked, really. . . . Still I don't want to bore you with that sort of wail. Have a drink, won't you?"

I accepted a drink and noticed that he poured himself out a stiff dose.

"Well, here's luck," he said.

When I left him he seemed to have recovered his good humor after being a little conscience-stricken because of that "nerve storm." And yet I was not absolutely sure of him in this new mood. I could not help fearing that he was putting on a mask to hide a murderous purpose. There was something sinister about his attempted concealment of that revolver. His explanation about jackals and Bedouins was not quite convincing. It was clearly my duty to warn young March, and yet I could not blurt out my secret fears crudely and brutally. Impossible to say, "You had better keep away from Eland. Don't stay alone in your tent tonight. He'll shoot you if he gets half a chance." . . . Perhaps I was thinking in terms of melodrama because of some psychological effect on the imagination caused by this solitude in the desert, this absolute stillness around us, and the spirit of the past associated with those distant pyramids and all our talk of Egyptian mysteries and unseen powers. All the same, I determined to keep close to young March and sleep in his tent that night under a plea of nervousness.

He came back across the sandhills not long before we set out for our ride, and he had rather a haggard look as though he had been wrestling with temptation and spiritual agony out there in the desert. We stood together beyond the tents exchanging only a word or two and watching the effects of the twilight. It was all magical and beyond words in beauty. For a little while the sky was flushed with crimson light and the desert was swept with opalescent colors passing in waves across the interminable sand. Then too quickly this color faded and we stood in a pearly luminance, ethereal and unearthly, so that we seemed to be disembodied and everything around us—those white tents, the sleeping camels, the drivers huddled under their blankets—became spiritualized and immaterial. Then darkness crept about our feet and lay like a veil upon the desert while, above, the sky was still pale blue, and stars came through it like swordpoints with a cold glitter, and a moon at three-quarters, hardly visible at first, brightened until it turned the sand to silver, or rather quicksilver, so that it seemed like liquid metal.

"Magical!" I said in a low voice.

"It's why the desert gets hold of one," answered March. "Vulgarity drops off one like a dirty cloak. The past becomes the pres-

ent. One gets outside Time, in a way."

Our fellow travellers had lit candles in their tents which glowed enchantingly. I could see the stout figure of Mrs. Lymposs like one of those shadow pictures which I used to watch as a small boy, bending over her bed, and then moving inside the tent. A slim figure stood outside one of the other tents looking up at the stars. It was Evelyn Eland, as I could tell by that white scarf round her head. A hundred yards away another figure, black and white, stood motionless in the moonlight like an Egyptian statue. It was Mustapha with the hawk's face, saying his evening prayer to Allah, or to those old gods of his race who still had power over his soul.

Presently there was a movement in the camp. The drivers prodded up their camels, which rose with their grotesque see-saw motion and stood silhouetted against the sky. Mustapha abandoned his statuesque pose and strode towards them and then mounted a little gray donkey. The camels and their drivers moved towards the tents and our fellow travellers gathered together with overcoats and wraps.

"Time to start," said young March, and we joined the rest of the group.

It is well to remember exactly what happened during the next few minutes, and I am certain of my accurate remembrance. The camels had lain down again at the bidding of their drivers so that we could mount. Lady Ladbrook gave a little shriek of mirth as her beast reared up backwards and forwards until it had established itself on four legs. Young March helped Evelyn into her saddle and saw her safely up before mounting himself.

"My family would like to see me now," said Mrs. Lymposs. "They wouldn't believe it."

Mr. Lymposs ran back to his tent to get his flask and was nearly unseated when his beast struggled up, so that he shouted out, "Great Caesar's ghost!"

Major Eland stood in the opening of his tent, and I remember perfectly well that Evelyn twisted round in her saddle and spoke to him.

"Sure you won't come, Dick?" she asked as though making a last appeal. "You'll be all alone, you know!"

"That's all right," he answered, rather gruffly. And then, less gruffly, "Good-bye, my dear. Have a good time. . . . I'll write a letter or two."

He stood watching us get away and then as I turned in my saddle to look back at him I saw that he went into the tent and let down the flap and for some reason put out the light.

I suppose we had been riding less than five minutes when young

March, whose camel was next to Evelyn's, called out to her.

"You haven't brought enough wraps, Evelyn. You'll be perished with cold before we get back. It's most dangerous, really! Let me go and fetch you something."

"I shall be all right," said Evelyn carelessly.

Mustapha was riding a yard or so ahead of her on his little gray donkey, but he had overheard this conversation and wheeled round.

"My lady is wrong," he said. "It is cold at night in the desert. I will go and fetch your cloak before we ride farther. It is better so."

Evelyn laughed and yielded to the entreaties which we all made to her. It was foolish of her to come for this moonlight ride in her thin white frock, with only a little silk jacket over it to keep her warm.

"There is an embroidered shawl inside my tent," she told Mustapha. "My husband will give it to you. It's on the bed. I hate to give you so much trouble."

"I am your dragoman," he answered, and we watched him as he rode back to the tent on his neat little donkey.

I remember taking advantage of this halt to light a cigarette. I was still smoking when Mustapha came back with the shawl, so that he could not have been gone more than ten minutes at the most. All of us saw him stand for a moment outside the tent and then stoop as he went under the flap which fell behind him. He was not in the tent more than a minute before he came out again and mounted his donkey before riding back.

"Sorry for holding up the caravan!" said Evelyn, and she thanked Mustapha for his services when he handed her the shawl which she dropped over the front of her saddle.

"I'll put it on when I feel cold," she said.

Certainly the air was warm then, for a glow of heat came up from the sand as we rode after the heat of the day. I remember every incident of that moonlight ride as though it happened yesterday, for it made an indelible impression upon my imagination. The white magic of the scene silenced us all for some time. Even Lady Ladbrook ceased chattering for at least half an hour, though afterwards I heard her talking to Mr. Lymposs who rode next to her. We all had our camels led, except Leonard March who guided his own, sitting cross-legged with his arms folded like an Arab who had lived all his life in the desert. There was no sound in the world about us except the soft pad of the camels in the sand and their quiet snufflings and heavy breathing.

Ahead of us the pyramids of Sakkara were black against the pale blue sky, and as we rode towards them their aspect became more monstrous and grim, like a row of giants sitting motionless.

The stars glittered with an intense brightness one does not see in Europe, and the moon flooded the great plain. Invisible presences seemed to be about us, innumerable ghosts of ancient history, the oldest civilization in the world. We moderns—six tourists from the Mediterranean cruise—were like the shadows of a spirit world in a moment of time which counts nothing in eternity.

I felt a soft warm hand reach up to mine and clasp it. It was my Bedouin driver who began to tell my fortune in queer unintelligible English. I could make out something about a fair lady and a great fortune coming to me—neither of which has approached! Once or twice I found Mustapha riding by my side on his donkey and saw his hawklike profile, touched by the moonlight. Horus, son of Osiris. Beyond doubt he had the old Egyptian blood in his veins. Then my camel caught up with Evelyn Eland and Leonard March who were riding side by side. Once or twice they turned to look at each other with smiling eyes. Once I heard Evelyn speak.

"This is dreamlike. It seems unreal."

"Perhaps our dreams are real," answered March.

It became chilly, quite suddenly, when we dismounted near the Step pyramid, and I heard Evelyn shiver a little.

"Better put on your shawl, my dear," said Mrs. Lymposs. "So foolish of you to risk a chill."

It was Leonard March who took the shawl from her saddle and put it round her neck, and it was perhaps a minute later—not more than that—when she said something with a kind of surprise in her voice:

"This shawl is wet! It's—sticky . . . at the ends."

She looked at her hands and gave a cry of dismay.

"It's blood. . . . My fingers are all red."

"Well, that's queer," said Mrs. Lymposs.

"Perhaps your camel has been chewing it," suggested Mr. Lymposs, who had a grudge against camels and was nervous of their teeth.

I took hold of Evelyn's hands and bent over them. They were dabbled in some wetness, and it was blood. I took the shawl from her neck and as I touched its fringe my own fingers became wet and sticky and I saw that it was soaked in blood.

A chill struck me and I shuddered, and as I looked up at Evelyn Eland I saw that her face was very white.

"What can it be?" she asked.

I stood staring at the shawl as we stood there under the shadow of the Step pyramid with the moonlight bright beyond the shadow.

"We had better go back," I said. "I'm afraid something

has—happened. Something rather dreadful."

Young March was distressed. I could see that he also did not like the look of this blood, and that some fear was in his mind. He went to the camel which Evelyn had been riding and examined it. Then he strode up to Mustapha and spoke to him rapidly in Arabic, and the dragoman answered quietly and raised his hands several times as though calling Allah for witness.

"What does he say?" I asked.

"He knows nothing," said March. "Major Eland was lying down when he went into the tent. He fetched the shawl and did not notice any blood. There is no cause for alarm, he thinks."

"Let's go back," I said sharply. "I feel—uneasy."

Evelyn had wiped her hands on a handkerchief.

"Perhaps it is nothing," she said. "Some silly little accident."

But though she spoke bravely there was a tremor in her voice and her face was still white.

So we rode back from Sakkara more quickly than we had gone and as we neared the camp Leonard March, who did not depend upon a Bedouin to lead him, rode ahead of us, kicking his heels into his camel's flanks and speaking some Arabic words to the beast. I saw him dismount and go into Major Eland's tent and presently a light glimmered within. It was perhaps a minute later when he came out again and there was something in his attitude there in the moonlight which told me of tragedy.

I was the next to go into the tent, having run across the sand after my camel had kneeled down and let me dismount.

"Keep Evelyn away," said March in a harsh voice. "It's horrible."

He stumbled towards her like a drunken man while I went into the tent.

A candle was burning on the washstand, which March must have lighted. Across the camp bed, face upwards, lay the body of Major Eland, and there was a dagger in his heart, and his white shirt was drenched with blood. I glanced at the dagger with quick remembrance. Eland had bought it at the same time as the alabaster statuette. Its handle was of some kind of metal—bronze, I suppose—moulded into the head of Horus, the son of Osiris, with his falcon face. Then I turned away from the body of that man, who had been my fellow traveller on this "pleasure" cruise, as we had called it, with unconscious irony. His eyes were open and seemed to stare at me, horribly.

In the opening of the tent stood Mustapha, and I heard the noise of his breath before I was aware of him close to me.

"Mâshallah!" he said. "Did he not curse the old gods? Surely they have heard. Is it not?"

I went past him into the moonlight and was in time to hold Evelyn, who fell half fainting into my arms.

"Dick!" she cried. "Dick!"

Later we heard her weeping beside her husband's body, until Mrs. Lymposs led her away to another tent.

We did not sleep that night while Leonard rode alone to Mena village and brought back a doctor on his camel, though I had seen enough of death to know that no doctoring could help the man who lay with that dagger in his heart.

Shortly after dawn three other men came riding on camels towards us. They were Egyptian police from Cairo, one of them an English officer who was polite but stern and suspicious. He questioned all of us separately, including Mustapha, and the camel drivers, and the Nubian cooks. He also took charge of a half-written letter which he had found in Eland's tent.

There was one question which racked my brain all night and for many nights afterwards. Had Eland killed himself with that hawk-headed dagger, or had Mustapha stabbed him when he went to fetch that shawl which was wet with blood when he brought it back? There is a chance —a million-to-one chance—that the dragoman had seized the shawl, believing that Eland was asleep, across his bed, and crept out again stealthily, not wishing to disturb a man whose temper he feared. That was the story he told in the courthouse in Cairo, and there was something that told in his favor and saved him from the gallows. It was the letter—unfinished—which had been found in Eland's tent. He must have begun it before we set out on that moonlight ride. It was a letter to his wife, and I remember some tragic words in it:

I won't stand in your way, my dear. You ought never to have married so old a man, broken by war, and still shell-shocked. I've been a bit of a brute to you and I ask your forgiveness. Nerves, really, not lack of love! Young March will make you happy, though I believe you when you say there has been no guilty love between you. I am ashamed of my jealousy and dark suspicions. That Ladbrook woman has a serpent's tongue. A female Iago. Well, you are riding into the moonlight, and before you come back I shall be on the lonely journey which all of us must make. What is at the journey's end? What life beyond death? In a few minutes, I shall know. . . .

It ended there, and was blotted with blood. Certainly he intended to kill himself. But even now I am not sure he killed himself. On the camp washstand by his bed lay that revolver which he had

wanted for target practice with jackals or Bedouins. It had not been fired.

I remember that crowded courthouse in Cairo, and Evelyn's white beauty against the whitewashed wall, and the agony in the eyes of Leonard March as she was questioned about her love for him, and as Lady Ladbrook gave evidence for which it is hard to forgive her. There was no need to tell about that night on the voyage out when Eland had followed his wife to the boat deck.

Our fellow travellers who had stayed in Cairo crowded the court. Their dragomans, in brightly colored robes, stood behind them. Naturally, the tourist crowd were delighted with this drama which had not been in the program as laid down by Cook & Sons. Naturally, they thought the worst of Evelyn and Leonard March. It is human nature to say, "I told you so." They whispered and moistened their lips with their tongues as the heat stifled us, and Evelyn fainted in her chair for a moment, before the verdict of "Suicide while temporarily insane."

Mustapha, who had been under arrest, was liberated, and standing in the sunlight with folded arms watched us come out of the court after the crowd had been pushed back by the police.

He was pale under his dark skin, but he smiled faintly as I nodded to him, and spoke to me in a low voice:

"*Mâshallah!* It is dangerous to curse the old gods."

When Evelyn came out with Mrs. Lymposs he strode forward and, bending low, kissed her white frock.

"May Allah make your days as white as milk," he said, and his eyes were luminous with great emotion.

She was dazed after her ordeal and did not seem to notice him in the hot sunlight there with all the crowd staring at her curiously.

We left Cairo three days after that night in the desert, which was four years ago. Since then I have seen Evelyn and Leonard March. People who have heard about their story—told in a hundred different ways and each one false—have their worst suspicions confirmed because Evelyn is now the wife of young March, in a villa at San Remo on the Italian Riviera. "Didn't she murder her husband?" they ask. "Didn't she bribe a dragoman of Cairo?" They feel aggrieved when I get angry with them and hate them for this slander. . . . But I still have my doubts about that hawk-faced dragoman who went into Eland's tent to fetch the shawl. He believed in the vengeance of the gods.

speak no evil

by . . . D. E. Forbes

Murder—despite what the writers say—isn't always a planned thing. The urge to kill can come suddenly.

HE SAT in the dark corner, careful to make no movement. They knew that he was there and seemed ready to let him stay, but he dared not make a sound to remind them.

The scarred tabletops had been wiped clean and the fading linoleum scrubbed hard, looking bright again in the wet but drab, once more, when dry. She had washed the lace scarfs for the tables and they looked white and stiff in the dim light, like the icing on the birthday cakes she baked to order.

To cover the sofa she had borrowed a bedspread from Mrs. Gordon's wash and placed it neatly over back, arms and seat. They sat on it now, across the room from him, one leaning on one curved arm, the other on the other. They hardly looked at each other.

"It depends on how you feel about the boy," she said moving her finger with great care over a darned spot on the pink spread.

The boy wished that he could melt further into the shadows of the gray-black wall.

The man's little black eyes looked across for him, found

There is an interesting morbid quality (if we can put it that way) to the writing of Bostonian D. E. Forbes, author of material which shares Taylor Caldwell's frequently expressed doubts, at least in many of her novels, about the mores and the manners—and the frailties—of the human race.

him, moved over his face like inquisitive ants. He could almost feel their tiny feet, on his nose, his eyes, his mouth.

"I got nothing against the boy. You say he's no trouble. That he don't eat much. I reckon he could earn his keep, as well as the rest of us."

Her fingers stopped in the center of the pink mend and the hand slid down into her flowered-cotton lap, as if it were tired.

"That was what it hinged on, for me. How you felt about the boy."

The lamp light shone on her bent head, on the neat center part in the dark hair. I don't think she's so very old, thought the boy.

The man put one leg over the other, moved it down again.

"I got no objections to him."

She looked up now, to him in his corner. Her eyes were asking questions. Her mouth was halfway smiling.

"Joel?"

He moved his chair a little. It creaked.

"Do you understand, Joel? We're going to live with Mr. Beaton on his farm. Do you understand, son?"

The boy looked at the man who looked at the boy. The boy nodded his head and his eyelids hid his eyes.

He heard her sigh and the man said, "Then it's settled." He heard the man move and his mother say, "Wait!"

"Joel—why don't you go out and see about your cat? Maybe he's hungry—or thirsty."

They were closer now on the sofa. The boy thought what an ugly sofa it was. Because of its shape—or the color—or the way it set against the wall.

"Joel?" It was the man now. There was a funny tight smile across his mouth.

The boy stood up and walked to the door. He opened it, walked out. Just before the screen banged he heard the springs of the sofa speak.

Out in the back, where the wash shack stood alongside the tall unpainted board fence, he looked for Blackie. He was missing from his bed of old rags in a cardboard box and the boy felt sad and angry as he looked along the empty fence. Blackie could come and go as he pleased. Blackie had friends, Blackie had love. Blackie could howl at the moon.

He wondered how it would be at Mr. Beaton's farm. He didn't remember being on a farm. He and his mother had lived in the city—for always. He thought that he was a little afraid of a farm.

"Joel!"

A square of light stalked out the back door, lit up the crowded, grassless plot. He moved forward, to the edge of the light.

"Come to bed, son. It's late. And we've a lot to do tomorrow."

He passed by her at the door

and she put a hand on his shoulder. He looked at the hand. It was reddish-white. The knuckles were big. The fingernails were short. Just for a moment he put his cheek against it. Then he went to bed.

They took a train to the farm and the boy carried Blackie in a basket. The cat wriggled and cried out once in awhile, but the boy placed it under his feet, in the darkness beneath the seat and no one seemed to notice. His mother knew, he was certain, but neither of them had so much as looked the knowledge to the other.

It took many hours to reach Mr. Beaton's part of the country and when they climbed off the train at a little station it was dusky, almost dark.

A farm wagon with a tall man in the buckboard waited for them and Mr. Beaton put an arm around his mother's shoulders, led her forward. The boy followed, carrying his basket and a grip.

"Tom—this is Mrs. Beaton. This is my hired man, Tom Wilson. Tom's been with me two years."

"That's doin' right well for me, ma'am." The tall man's eyes were pale in the twilight, his teeth white. He looked beyond the woman to the boy.

"And this is my boy, Joel." She shoved him forward a little. "Shake hands with Mr. Wilson, Joel."

He put up a hand and the other took it. His hand was hard and rough, calloused. He peered down at the boy. The bright teeth gleamed.

"Pleased to meet you, Joel."

The boy nodded.

His mother put an arm around him. "Joel—he don't talk. He's a bright boy," her other hand smoothed his hair, "but he fell on a railing when he was young—and he don't talk."

The boy could feel the eyes of the men.

"Hop in, Joel," said Tom and he gave him a hand. But as he reached and stretched to climb over the wheel, the basket jiggled, then tilted and the cover came loose. A sleek black streak flew from its place of captivity.

The boy cried out as best he could. It was an animal wail, of alarm—despair.

"What's the matter?" asked Mr. Beaton, his small dark eyes searching the gloom. Joel waved the empty basket.

"It's his cat," said his mother. "He had the cat in the basket. It's gotten away."

"Damn," said Mr. Beaton. "Blast the cat. It's dark now. We've got to get home. There are chores to do. Tom and I can't sit here and look for a cat."

"There's quite a few at the farm," said Tom, his hands on the reins.

Joel climbed down and squatted, looking under carts and boxes, station porch.

"Joel," said his mother, "Mr. Beaton's right. We can't wait. When we come again to town we'll look for the kitten."

Joel thought he saw the gleaming eyes, moving toward the wagon. He came forward and Mr. Beaton took his arm. "Come on now—up you go."

Joel twisted away. Blackie was under the wagon. He knelt and looked there. He saw spokes and dust and crumpled paper.

"Come on, boy," yelled Mr. Beaton, "or we'll leave you here."

Joel squatted back on his heels.

"All right," said Mr. Beaton and his voice was very cross. "Let's go, Tom."

"But—," said Joel's mother.

"Shhh," said Mr. Beaton. "Just scaring him. Teaching him some discipline."

The horses moved and the wheels turned and Joel saw it then. The firm black body, squashed and flattened, lying limp. He knelt over it in the dust and cried aloud.

The wagon stopped.

"Joel," his mother was beside him.

"What's the matter?" asked Mr. Beaton from the buckboard.

Tom got down and came over to them, looked at the boy.

"Put him in the basket, boy. We'll bury him—proper."

Joel could not touch the fur so they took Blackie from him and placed him in the basket, shut the lid.

Then Tom helped his mother and him into the wagon. The wheels turned and the trees moved, but Joel could not see because of his tears.

"It was all he had," said his mother. "Just an alley cat, but it was all he had."

"We'll get him another," said Mr. Beaton cheerfully. "There's three or four at the farm. Having kittens all the time. Have to drown 'em we get so many. We'll get the boy another cat."

Mr. Beaton, thought the boy, is a murderer.

The house was a big house with heavy furniture and none too clean. "Needs a woman's touch," said his mother, placing the lace scarves on walnut tables.

"Can't be helped," said Mr. Beaton with a laugh, "an old batch like myself and a young batch like Tom here—we're not much on folderal. You do whatever you like. I'll take Joel out and show him his chores."

There were large brown cows with horns and heavy milk bags. There were chickens and there were pigs with flat blunt noses. There was a woodpile with an ax. These were Joel's duties. Help milk the cows, take grain to the chickens, garbage to the pigs, and cut the wood.

Tom showed him how to milk the cow. "See—you just put your fingers around here and you start squeezing at the top. That's it—now, don't be afraid."

Joel watched the white stream, guided by his fingers, splash into the pail. He looked at Tom and smiled.

"You're a smart boy. And your mother's a mighty pretty woman. Pears to me she's a good bit younger than Mr. Beaton?"

Tom rubbed a hand over his curly fair hair and looked at Joel like he wanted an answer. Joel shook his head.

"Yeah," said Tom, "forgot you can't talk. Well, I been around a few places, Joel, and you can take it from me—your maw's a right pretty woman. Wonder how she met up with old Mr. Beaton. Or more important—how she came to marry him."

Joel shook his head. A wavy strand of hair, like his mother's, fell onto his brow.

Tom grinned. "Guess I'll have to ask her—huh, Joel? Come on now, let's relieve this lady of the rest of her milk or she'll be mighty cross with us."

Maybe, thought the boy as one of the farm cats chased a mouse into the hay, it would be better than he'd hoped. It looked as though the cat were having kittens.

He slept well, very well, in a little room—all his own, under the eaves. Down the hall were his mother and Mr. Beaton. But he wouldn't think about that. And out in the barn where a snug little place had been fixed up for him, was Tom.

The winter started, little by little. The leaves left and the crops browned out. The animals were growing heavy coats and Mr. Beaton told him the cat's kittens were all born dead. He looked at Mr. Beaton—and turned away.

There was beginning to be less to do for the men and Joel noticed that Tom took to hanging around the house in the morning, specially when Mr. Beaton was out on an errand.

"I got more important things to do, Tom Wilson, than spend my mornings making coffee for you." His mother was scrubbing at her washtubs, her sleeves rolled up above her elbows. Joel thought her elbows looked pretty, fat with dimpled faces.

"Lot of hard work on a place like this for a woman like you, Laurie."

She swished the clothes up and down. "I'm used to hard work."

"You're the kind who should be all dressing up and going to parties. Laughing and dancing."

She began to rub vigorously on a pair of overalls. "Never had no time for that. When Joel's daddy died, I was seventeen. I had to go to work. Washing, sewing, baking—anything I could do."

Tom set his coffee cup down and walked over to stand behind her.

"That's why you married Beaton. A man old enough to be your father. Cause you were tired."

She swung around to face him. Her face was flushed and Joel was startled to see that her eyes were bright with tears.

"You got no right to talk that way. Mr. Beaton is my husband. He took Joel and me and gave us a home. He's been good to us. You got no right."

Her shoulders shook and Joel put his eyes on the floor. He'd never seen his mother like this. He didn't like to look.

Tom's voice was low. "I got no right?"

Joel looked up. Tom's hands were covering his mother's elbows, her eyes were looking into his. Somewhere out in the yard Joel heard a footstep and he moved from his chair. His mother shook away from Tom and turned to her task. When Mr. Beaton entered Tom was putting on his coat. Mrs. Beaton was washing. Joel was piling wood by the stove.

"It's going to storm," said Mr. Beaton.

Joel wasn't sure how many nights later he saw a figure slipping across the snow toward the barn. There was a creak of light that gleamed, just for a second, around Tom's door. Mr. Beaton, thought Joel. Must have been caught in town by the storm. The wind came up again soon after that and howled.

The winter was long. In the middle of it, Joel thought his mother lost her happy look. Tom seemed either glad enough to sing or mad enough to shout. Mr. Beaton ignored them all and read seed catalogues.

Joel chopped wood and brought it in and stacked it and wished that he had Blackie. And the days dragged.

It was nearing Christmas when Mr. Beaton announced that he had to go into the city. Not the town, but the city. He had a sparkle in his small eyes and he winked at Joel. Tom would take him to the station and he would be back on Thursday.

"Barney," said Joel's mother, "couldn't I go with you?"

"Not this time," said Mr. Beaton lighting his pipe. "You women—you can't stand to let a man surprise you. You'll be fine here with Tom and Joel to look after you." And that's the way it was. Nothing she could say would change his mind.

Tom took him to the station early Tuesday morning and Joel's mother, watching the departure from the porch, looked again like she might cry.

The boy touched her arm and she gave a half-laugh and took his hand. Together they went into the house.

"Sit down, Joel. I never see you by yourself no more. It's a different life here, Joel, less free for you, I guess and—" her voice sank, "Maybe I did the wrong thing."

He wanted to tell her so des-

perately. He went to the upright piano. Standing on its high top was a picture of Mr. Beaton, taken in younger days. Joel took it down and brought it to her. He pointed at the face and shook his head with urgency.

His mother gave that same half-laugh, half-cry and pulled him to her. "You mustn't blame Mr. Beaton. He's older than I am, Joel. He doesn't realize that boys want pets and bikes and fishing trips. He's forgotten."

Joel sat on the floor at her knee and put his head in her lap.

"It isn't Mr. Beaton that's failed to measure up, Joel. It's me. I thought I was a lot better woman than I am. And come to find out—I'm no better than most. No better at all."

Joel raised his head and shook it. But she was seeing other places, other times.

"And now I don't know what to do. I got to do something. I can't live under Mr. Beaton's roof any longer the way things are. But go with Tom? A drifter? And take my boy. My poor boy who can't talk and never will. Oh, Joel, what shall I do?"

Joel took her hand and held it to his cheek. They sat like that until they heard the horses. Masculine boots upon the porch and the door opened to the winter sun. Tom stood there, his yellow head uncovered. He had a small box in his hands.

"Joel," he said, beckoning with the box, "I brought you something." The boy took the package and felt movement within it. He looked up at the tall man.

"Open it. Open it."

His mother came up behind him and he took off the lid. Inside was a kitten, a small black furry spring that leapt into his arms at its release.

"Tom!" said his mother and their hands met. Joel looked at her over his kitten. Her gray eyes were shining and her lips were pink.

"When Beaton did away with the new batch I made my mind up—first chance I'd get Joel a kitten. Whether he liked it or not."

"But I thought they were born dead?"

Tom moved closer to her.

"Nope. Cute little buttons. But he says he don't need no more cats around. Specially in the house. Says they make him sneeze or some such nonsense. So he drowned them."

Joel hugged the kitten to his chest so hard that it mewed.

"Don't worry, Joel. He won't hurt this one. Not if I have my way, he won't."

Tom and his mother were looking at each other again. Their eyes were saying things that Joel could never understand.

"Joel," said his mother softly. "Take the kitten up to your room. I'll call you when lunch is ready."

The next day started out crisp and clear. Joel heard his mother

up early and taking the kitten from its place on his pillow he hurried down to the warmth of the kitchen.

His mother was scrubbing the floor. "Joel," she sat on her heels. She looked rested—and very young, "you get dressed and eat your breakfast. Then you go up and pack your things. We're going away—today—with Tom."

Joel put the kitten down and it batted a soap bubble. He struggled into his overalls and his face was alight.

His mother's smile faded. "Oh, I know you like Tom, son. He's a good man, if he is a wee bit unreliable. Things won't be as safe for us as they were here. But sometimes the heart tells us to do things, even when the head says no."

While Joel ate his oatmeal she polished the lamps. "I want to leave every single thing in this house spotless," she said, "and we're taking nothing. Nothing at all 'cept what we came with. You remember that, Joel."

The door banged open and Tom stood on the threshhold, his breath showing white in the cold.

"It's a wonderful day," he said and he walked right over the newly-scrubbed floor and took Joel's mother up in his arms.

Joel grinned and picked up his kitten. He hurried upstairs and packed his belongings. He had even kept Blackie's basket and it would do fine for the kitten. He brought them down and stacked them with the others—there in the kitchen.

"But, Tom," his mother was saying, "we got time. You said the train don't leave 'til three. Joel can cut some wood and feed the hens, then we'll be all caught up. 'Cept for the cows. What will you do about the poor cows?"

"I'll send Clint Rogers from town. He'll take care of 'em. I don't know why you're so set on leaving things so ship-shape, Laurie."

"Not exactly ship-shape, Tom. There'll be one or two things missing." His mother's voice was low and solemn.

Tom's eyes dropped. "All right. Run along, Joel. Do your chores. But hurry. We don't want to miss that train."

As he closed the door he saw the tall man take his mother close and hold her. She looked happy there.

He was chopping wood when he heard the sound. It was a chugging noise from down the road, and he stopped in the middle of a swing to watch.

It was an automobile, all bright black and red in the cold sun, and it skidded around the turn-in to the farm and came up the road to the barn.

As soon as it got close enough, Joel saw that Mr. Beaton was driving it.

On legs fired with fear he ran

to the house, stumbled across the porch and flung open the door.

Tom and his mother were there, dressed for traveling.

"Joel! What's the matter?"

He ran to them and pointed behind him. He tried to take his mother's hat from her head. He tried to make them know but before they became aware Mr. Beaton stood in the doorway.

Joel turned slowly. They were frozen, all of them, and they stood open-mouthed. The kitten coming in shied at a shadow and tumbled across the floor. It was the only thing that moved.

Mr. Beaton's eyes left Joel's mother and Tom at last and moved to the baggage by the hall door. Then his arms moved and closed the outside door behind him. He took off his gloves. The kitten ventured forward, arched its back, opened its pink mouth. It spat and a large boot knocked the tiny tiger across the room. It hit the wall and lay still.

"Barney—" said his mother. She took a step backward.

"All right, Beaton." Tom went to meet him. "We're leaving. She loves me. She's going with me."

Joel waited for the fight. He knew that Tom must be the winner. Then they could go away.

Tom hit Mr. Beaton in the mouth and blood spurted. But Mr. Beaton kept coming and his fists came too. They swung and flailed. Tom's fists clawed and struck. The men rolled briefly on the floor and they fell across chairs and tables. They stood up and slugged it out and they lay again on the floor and kneed and gouged.

Until at last one of them lay still and the other arose.

"I couldn't help it, Barney," said his mother and she stretched out her hands. "I tried, but I couldn't help it. We'll go—and never bother you—"

The big hand flashed across her face, leaving a red slash in its wake.

"You're my wife," he said, "and you're going to stay and be my wife." The hand struck again and she fell against the wall sobbing.

It was then that Joel realized he had brought it with him in his hurry. He looked at it, hanging from his hand. He saw the kitten, silent in the corner. He saw Tom, struggling to arise. He saw his mother hiding her face and heard her tears.

He saw the man with the little black eyes. And then he saw an arc and the sudden gleam of metal as his own arms moved up —and down. It was easy—like chopping wood.

THE saint's RATINGS

There is one born every minute

We wonder if Mr. Barnum meant author, publisher, or reader. One thing is sure, he could have bet any of three ways and have won. However, Mr. Barnum liked a healthy return on his investments and to insure this return, he gave his public value for their money. Today—you pay your quarter and take your chance, but this reviewer thinks you are entitled to the same kind of return for your money that Mr. Barnum gave to grandfather in his day.

OUR RATING SYSTEM:

- Three haloes: Outstanding
- Two haloes: Above average
- One halo: Passable reading
- A pitchfork: For the ashcan

JOURNEY INTO TERROR, by Peter Rabe (Gold Medal, 25¢)

Having reviewed most of Mr. Rabe's tours de force in the paperback field, we have become—without knowing him—rather fond of him, as one might over some distant niece or nephew heard of but pleasantly unseen. For the most part, Mr. Rabe has returned this affection with passably good stories. However, we feel that Mr. R. should get away from the fetish he seems to have about blackmail in his plots and try something slightly different. The price of murder is, of course, blackmail and Mr. Rabe bought it for one halo.

THE BRAT, by Gil Brewer (Gold Medal, 25¢)

For pure unadulterated fiction (some people might call it by another name) it's hard to beat. We don't know when Mr. Brewer was last in Florida, or for that matter, whether he has ever seen the sunshine state, but I, for one, would be loathe to venture into the glades with him, if his story is any criterion as to his knowledge of that tractless little waste. There may be a great many people in this world that are prototype of the characters in this story, but unfortunately Mr. Brewer's puppets emerge from the pages of his story without substance or character and the stage they play on is slightly dog eared.

THE PRICE OF MURDER, by John D. Macdonald (Dell, 25¢)

We had occasion sometime ago to review a book by Mr. Macdonald, one in which his publishers touted him as "Today's most explosive mystery writer." In this, his present offering, his publishers claim "When better mysteries are written, Macdonald will write them." All we can say is, go, go, go boy. It is an awfully long trail awinding.

ASSIGNMENT—BUDAPEST, by Edward S. Aarons (Gold Medal, 25¢)

Sam Durell back again in another C. I. A. adventure. This time even more unbelievable than ever. We are starting to believe not only that Sam will never learn the finer arts of espionage, but we have a sneaking suspicion that Sam really isn't with the C. I. A. Fiction is fiction, but could we have a little authentic background and some, even if only a few, believable characters?

decision

by . . . Earle Basinski

I WAS sitting at my desk in the bank, bent over some FHA loan applications when Vern left her cashier's cage and swayed over to the soft drink vending machine. I followed her with my eyes, watching her hips roll, noting the long legs, slender waist, wide shoulders. I swallowed, turning my attention back to the papers I was checking, hoping I could get my mind off her long enough to either okay them or reject them. It was tough.

About ten-thirty I went down to the small bar and coffee shop in the bank and had a cup of coffee and sweet roll. It was a welcome change from a monotonous morning. When I finished and returned to my desk, a Mr. Francis Galley was sitting in the side chair by the desk, evidently awaiting my return. We shook hands.

The other was there at his house, armed and ready to kill. Already a murderer, one more wouldn't matter.

"Morning, Mr. Galley," I said.

He smiled toothily. "Good morning, Henry. It's beautiful outside. Just the day for some mighty high financing."

"It certainly is. What can I do for you?"

"A lot, a whole lot. I've got a

Earle Basinski, author of DEATH IS A COLD, KEEN EDGE (*Signet*) *and* THE BIG STEAL (*Dutton*) *is one of the more interesting representatives of what has been called the Spillane school. He makes a first appearance here with this portrait of an average man suddenly facing ruthlessness.*

proposition, Henry. One I think you'll go for without any hesitation."

"Let's hear it," I said, "this bank is fairly broadminded as you know."

He didn't say anything just then, merely extracted a cigar from his suit pocket—one of the dollar kind which was sealed in an aluminum container. He opened it, slid the cigar into his palm, licked the end, bit it off and shoved it in his mouth with a sigh of contentment.

I didn't say anything. Francis Galley was a newcomer to our town. Everybody seemed to think he was quite the boy, and since his arrival he'd moved in the upper circles of our so-called society. Galley was in his early fifties, a shade over six feet, with a ruddy complexion, blue eyes, and grayish, thinning hair.

Most important of all, he'd deposited five thousand dollars in his checking account when he arrived.

So I settled back in my chair waiting for him to begin talking. I lit a cigarette and watched him. He was dressed like he was going to escort Miss America to a ball, Ascot tie, snow white shirt with long pointed collar, spotted red knit tie, cordovan shoes shined blood red, and a single breasted suit of brown tweed that wouldn't have cost less than two hundred dollars.

He took a deep drag off his cigar, exhaled slowly and leaned toward me, an air of confidence in his bearing. "I have a deal, Henry, one that I think you'll be interested in hearing. Very much so."

"You've intimated as much. What is it?"

"Don't rush me, my boy. Go slowly, go slowly."

"I'm in no hurry. I've got all day . . . and tomorrow too if necessary."

"Fine. That's just dandy." He beamed at me, showing the toothy smile again. "You see, Henry, I know all about you. I made it a point to investigate you thoroughly. I've known for sometime."

I sat up straight, my muscles tense. "For what purpose, Mr. Galley, my life is open to the public." I couldn't figure what he was driving toward. "I haven't done anything."

"I know, I know."

"Well, what is it then?" I was puzzled and just a little bit frightened. He seemed so sure of himself.

"I know for example that you're a bachelor, Henry."

"That's a crime?"

"Not at all. And I know that you're thirty-five, honest, hard working, and decent."

"So."

"And that your mother and father have been dead a good many years. And that you have a brother named Joe—a half-wit

that you've been caring for all your working life, ever since your mother and father died."

I started up out of the chair.

"Easy, Henry, easy. Don't get excited, my boy. You haven't heard the rest of the story."

I sat back. His smugness irritated me, and for some unaccountable reason I wanted to smash his smooth, bland face. "Don't say anything about Joe, he's all right."

"I never said he wasn't, but he's a drag on you both financially and otherwise. Am I right?"

It was beginning to get deeper under my skin. "All right, all right, so what?"

"So this. I also know you think a great deal of Joe. And I know that Miss Stegar won't have you because of Joe."

It was true I thought, slowly digesting what Galley was saying. Joe, poor Joe. And lovely, lovely Vern. "Just what are you getting at?" I gritted between clenched teeth.

"Just this," Galley said slyly. He reached down by the chair, picked up a brief case by his right foot, unzipped the case, and held it open so I could see inside. There were stacks of money there —and plenty of them.

"You want to deposit this money? Is that it?"

"Heavens no. This is hot money, my boy."

"Hot money?"

"Yes. So hot you couldn't touch it without scalding yourself. And incidentally, if word got out, you'd have every policeman in the country on your neck. Plus the FBI. You see, this money is marked."

"But how . . ."

"Never mind how."

I sat back, my brain in a whirl.

He continued. "You remember reading about the Stensano kidnapping, don't you?"

"Sure, everybody knows about that."

"All right, Henry, there was half a million dollars involved. This money is part of the ransom. Not all of it by any means, but a good portion."

I snuffed out the butt of my cigarette in the tray on my desk. I inched my foot forward toward the alarm button concealed under the carpet.

"I wouldn't touch that button if I were you," Galley said softly. "I wouldn't move. If I were you I'd act perfectly normal, just as though we were talking over a business loan."

"Why?" I was getting mad. "What the hell can you do about it?"

"Nothing much," he said, "but a friend of mine is with your brother now at your house. He has a gun and he doesn't mind using it. His name is Robert and he's murdered once—the law knows this. One more killing on his part won't matter too much."

Galley smiled again, beady eyes glittering. "After all, you can only die once."

Past him and behind the cage across the floor I could see Vern. Even from where I was she attracted me like a magnet attracts steel shavings. But she wouldn't marry me. And I'd gotten about as far with her as you could throw the Empire State building with one hand. "All right," I said to Galley, "just what is it I can do for you? Is this a robbery?"

He laughed. "Heavens no, I couldn't do anything crude as that. We must be discreet. Listen, Henry, my boy."

I was mostly ears by now, and if I'd been listening any harder I'd have fallen on my face.

"You're a vice president here," Galley said, "that means you have access to the vaults."

"I thought this wasn't a hold-up?"

"It isn't, it isn't. Be patient, my boy."

"Go ahead."

"Every bank takes old money each day and puts it aside until it reaches a certain amount. Say fifteen or twenty thousand dollars."

"I know this," I said.

"Then it is sent to the Federal Reserve bank in their particular district."

"So?"

"It just so happens that when this old money is received, it is sent to Washington and destroyed. After being counted of course. The total amount has to be correct."

"I still don't understand."

"But Henry, my boy, there's absolutely no check made on this old money."

"No check?"

"Not on ones, fives, tens, and twentys. Anything larger than a fifty-dollar-bill they scan to see if it's counterfeit or marked. Do you realize the implications now?"

I lit another cigarette. I was beginning to understand what he was driving at, but I didn't want to let him know yet. "Then just what is it you want me to do?"

He caressed the brief case with his hand. "Just this. Since there's no check made, I want you to take this money I have here, carry it down into the vault when no one is watching, and exchange it for old bills."

"What!"

"Exactly, my dear boy. There is ten thousand here in small denominations. All you have to do is slide this money between the stacks of old bills and no one will be the wiser. Just be certain you take out the same amount, Henry. Then the bills will be destroyed and you'll be in the clear. And I'll have some nice dirty old money which I can spend at least one more time. Do you understand?"

I nodded. He certainly had it figured. "Suppose I won't do it."

"You'll do it all right. Because if you don't, Joe will die.

You wouldn't want anything to happen to poor Joe. I might add that my friend knows how to inflict a great deal of pain before he puts the finishing touch to a victim. And Joe doesn't like pain, does he?"

"How many times will I have to do this?"

Galley gazed at the ceiling reflectively. "About four more times I should say. And then we'll be gone."

"Give me a few seconds to think this over," I said. I thought of Joe who depended on me, whose love for me was beyond description. I thought of his eyes and the way they looked at me. I thought of his man's body playing with boy's toys. Forever, I thought, forever. And then I thought of Vern.

"Remember, Henry," Galley said, "there's no danger to you. No one will ever know. And afterwards my friend and I will quietly depart your fair town. You'll never see us again. But before we go, we've got to get rid of this marked money."

"What if I call the police?"

"You wouldn't do that, Henry, you're too smart. If anything suspicious happens, Joe will die. We aren't taking chances now. No one must enter your home until we've switched all the money. And I mean no one, Henry, not even a carpenter or an electrician or the ice man. We're taking no chances. You've got to make sure of that, my boy, for your brother's sake. No slip ups. Do you understand?"

"I understand." I zipped up the case, feeling the bulkiness of the money inside, slid it in my desk drawer. I nodded to Galley. "I'll do it just as you say."

Galley got up and we shook hands. "Fine. I thought you would. You're a sensible person. Have the money for me tomorrow at ten. I'll be here."

"All right. It'll be ready for you."

He smiled frostily and for the first time I could really notice the diamond hard glitter of those blue eyes. He turned and walked across the marble floor toward the front door of the bank. A very dignified gentleman.

I stared at the door for a long time, then I shuffled those FHA loan papers back in front of me, but I wasn't seeing them. Not really. I was seeing Joe and then I was seeing Vern. My stomach was empty as a burned out flash bulb and my mouth had an almond bitter taste. But I knew now what I was going to do.

I sighed, picked up the phone with a steady hand and dialed the FBI. I told Fred Small, agent in charge what had happened, the whole story from beginning to end. "Good for you, Henry," he said, "it takes guts to do what you're doing."

"I know," I said.

"Put the marked dough in a

safe place for us and we'll take care of the crud in your house. And we'll get Galley too. He's had it, brother, he's most certainly had it."

"I hope so."

"But listen," Fred said softly, a tinge of remorse in his voice, "there's a chance Joe might get hurt. A good chance, better than good, a hundred to one. There's not much we can do about it."

"Well, try to do the best you can," I said and then hung up. But I knew it was useless.

I stood up behind my desk, kicked the swivel chair back and started toward Vern. She was alone in her cage, counting bills. Her green eyes were deep and cool and remote. Her blonde hair looked like carefully brushed corn silk.

Yet with it all I could see a vision of Joe. And inside me there was a sick feeling spreading like an ugly stain. I wondered if it would ever go away. . . .

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free with this box

by . . . Harlan Ellison

They say there is a little larceny in most of us. How is this curbed—in some—and encouraged in others?

His name was David Thomas Cooper. His mother called him Davey, and his teachers called him David, but he was old enough now to be called the way the guys called him: Dave. After all, eight years old was no longer a child. He was big enough to walk to school himself, and he was big enough to stay up till eight-thirty any week night.

Mommy had said last year, "For every birthday, we will let you stay up a half hour later," and she had kept her word. The way he figured it, a few more years, and he could stay up all night, almost.

He was a slim boy, with unruly black hair that cowlicked up in the back, and slipped over his forehead in the front. He had an angular face, and wide deep eyes of black, and he sucked his thumb when he was sure no one was watching.

And right now, right this very minute, the thing he wanted most in all the world was a complete set of the buttons.

Davey reached into his pants pocket, and brought out the little cloth bag with the drawstring.

When Harlan Ellison was ten years old in Painesville, Ohio, an incident somewhat like the one in this story (up to a point) took place. Today he is serving with the army at Ft. Knox. We sincerely hope his collecting days are over. It seems the government does not hand out gold samples.

Originally it had held his marbles, but now they were back home in his room, in an empty Thom McAn shoe box. Now the little bag held the buttons. He turned sidewise on the car seat, and pried open the bag with two fingers. The buttons clinked metallically. There were twenty-four of them in there. He had taken the pins off them, because he wasn't a gook like Leon, who wore *his* on his beanie. Davey liked to lay the buttons out on the table, and arrange them in different designs. It wasn't so much that they had terrific pictures on them, though each one contained the face of a familiar comic character, but it was just *having* them.

He felt so good when he thought that there were only eight more to get.

Just Skeezix, Little Orphan Annie, Andy Gump, the Little King, B.O. Plenty, Mandrake the Magician, Harold Teen—and the scarcest one of them all—Dick Tracy. Then he would have the entire set, and he would beat out Roger and Hobby and even Leon across the street.

Then he would have the whole set offered by the cereal company. And it wasn't just the competition with the other kids; he couldn't quite explain it, but it was a feeling of *accomplishment* every time he got a button he did not have already. When he had them all, just those last eight, he would be the happiest boy in the world.

But it was dangerous, and Davey knew it.

It wasn't that Mommy wouldn't buy him the boxes of Pep. They were only 23¢ a box, and Mommy bought one each week, but that was only *one* comic character button a week! Not hardly enough to get the full set before they stopped putting the buttons in and offered something new. Because there was always so much *duplication,* and Davey had three Superman buttons (they were the *easiest* to get) while Hobby only had one Dick Tracy. And Hobby wouldn't trade. So Davey had had to figure out a way to get more buttons.

There were thirty-two glossy, colored buttons in the set. Each one in a cellophane packet at the bottom of every box of Pep.

One day, when he had gone shopping with Mommy, he had detached himself from her, and wandered to the cereal shelves. There he had taken one of the boxes down, and before he had quite known what he was doing, had shoved his forefinger through the cardboard, where the wall and bottom joined. He could still remember his wild elation at feeling the edge of the packet. He had stuck in another finger, widening the rip in the box, and scissored out the button.

That had been the time he had gotten Annie's dog Sandy.

That had been the time he had known he could not wait for

Mommy to buy her box a week. Because that was the time he got Sandy, and no one, not *anyone,* in the whole neighborhood, had even *seen* that button. That had been the time.

So Davey had carefully and assiduously cajoled Mommy every week, when she went to the A&P. It had seemed surprising at first, but Mommy loved Davey, and there was no trouble about it.

That first week, when he had gotten Sandy, he had learned that it was not wise to be in the A&P with Mommy, because she might discover what he was doing. And though he felt no guilt about it, he knew he was doing wrong . . . and he would just die if Mommy knew about it. She might wander down the aisle where he stood—pretending to read the print on the back of the box, but actually fishing about in the side for the cellophane packet—and see him. Or they might catch him, and hold him, and she would be called to identify this naughty boy who was stealing.

So he had learned the trick of waiting in the car, playing with the buttons in the bag, till Mommy came from the A&P with the boy, and they loaded the bags in, and then she would kiss him and tell him he was such a good boy for waiting quietly, and she would be right back after she had gone to the Polish Bakery across the street, and stopped into the Woolworth's.

Davey knew how long that took. Almost half an hour.

More than long enough to punch holes in ten or twelve boxes, and drag out the buttons that lay within. He usually found at least two new ones. At first—that second week he had gone with Mommy to the shopping—he had gotten more than that. Five or six. But with the eventual increase in duplication, he was overjoyed to find even one new button.

Now there were only eight left, and he emptied the little cloth bag onto the car seat, making certain no buttons slipped between the seats.

He turned them all up, so their rounded tops were full toward him. He rotated them so the Phantom and Secret Agent X-9 were not upside-down. Then he put them in rows of four; six rows with four in a row. Then he put them in rows of eight. Then he just scooted them back into the bag and jingled them hollowly at his ear.

It was the *having,* that was all.

"How long have I been?" Mommy asked from outside the window. Behind at her right a fat, sweating boy with pimples on his forehead held a big box, high to his chest.

He didn't answer her, because the question had never really been asked. Mommy had that habit. She asked him questions, and was always a little surprised when he answered. Davey had

learned to distinguish between questions like, "Where did you put your bedroom slippers?" and "Isn't this a lovely hat Mommy's bought?"

So he did not answer, but watched with the interest of a conspirator waiting for the coast to clear, as Mommy opened the front door, and pushed the seat far forward so the boy could put the box in the back seat. Davey had to scrunch far forward against the dashboard when she did that, but he liked the pressure of the seat on his back.

Then she leaned over and kissed him, which he liked, but which made his hair fall over his forehead, and Mommy's eyes crinkled up the nice way, and she smoothed back his hair. Then she slammed the door, and walked across the street, to the bakery.

Then, when Mommy had gone into the bakery, he got out of the car, and walked across the summer sidewalk to the A&P. It was simple getting in, and he knew where the cereals were brightly stacked. Down one aisle, and into a second, and there, halfway down, he saw the boxes.

A new supply! A new batch of boxes since last week, and for an instant he was cold and terrified that they had stopped packing the comic buttons, that they were offering something worthless like towels or cut-outs or something.

But as he came nearer, his heart jumped brightly in him, and he saw the words FREE WITH THIS BOX! on them.

Yes, those were the boxes with the comic buttons.

Oh, it was going to be a wonderful day, and he hummed the little tune he had made up that went:

"Got a nickel in my pocket,
"Gonna spend it all today.
"Got my buttons in my pocket,
"Gonna get the rest today."

Then he was in front of them, and he had the first one in his hands. He held the box face-toward-him, hands at the bottom on the sides, and he was pressing, pressing, pressing his finger into the cardboard joint. It was sometimes difficult, and the skin between his first and second fingers was raw and cracked from rubbing against the boxes. This time, however, the seam split, and he had his fingers inside.

The packet was far over, and he had to grope, tearing the box a little more. His finger split the waxpaper liner that held the cereal away from the box, but in a moment he had his finger down on the packet, and was dragging it out.

It was another Sandy.

He felt an unhappiness like no other he had ever known except the day he got his new trike, and scratched it taking it out the driveway. It was an all-consuming thing, and he would have cried right there, except he knew there were more boxes. He shoved the

button back in, because that wouldn't be the right thing to do —to take a button he already had. That would be waste, and dishonest.

He took a second box. Then a third, then a fourth, then a fifth.

By the time he had opened eight boxes, he had not found a new one, and was getting desperate, because Mommy would be back soon, and he had to be there when she came to the car. He was starting his ninth box, the others all put back where they had come from, but all crooked, because the ripped part on their bottom made them sit oddly, when the man in the white A&P jacket came by.

He had been careful to stop pushing and dragging when anyone came by . . . had pretended to be just reading what the boxes said . . . but he did not see the A&P man.

"Hey! What're ya doin' there?"

The man's voice was heavy and gruff, and Davey felt himself get cold all the way from his stomach to his head. Then the man had a hand around Davey's shoulder, and was turning him roughly. Davey's hand was still inside the box. The man stared for an instant, and then his eyes widened.

"So *you're* the one's been costin' us so much dough!"

Davey was sure he would never forget that face if he lived to be a thousand or a million or forever.

The man had eyebrows that were bushy and grew together in the middle, with long hairs that flopped out all over. He had a mole on his chin, and a big pencil behind one ear. The man was staring down at Davey with so much anger, Davey was certain he would wither under the glance in a moment.

"Come on, you, I'm takin' you to the office."

Then he took Davey to a little cubicle behind the meat counter, and sat Davey down, and asked him, "What's your name?"

Davey would not answer.

The worst thing, the most worst thing in the world, would be if Mommy found out about this. Then she would tell Daddy when he came home from the store, and Daddy would be even madder, and spank him with his strap.

So Davey would not tell the man a thing, and when the man looked through Davey's pockets and found the bag with the buttons, he said, "Oh, *ho*. Now I *know* you're the one!" and he looked some more.

Finally he said, "You got no wallet. Now either you tell me who you are, who your parents are, or I take you down to the police station."

Still Davey would say nothing, though he felt tears starting to urge themselves from his eyes. And the man pushed a button on a thing on his desk, and when a woman came in—she had on a white jacket belted at the waist—

the moley man said, "Mert, I want you to take over for me for a little while. I've just discovered the thief who has been breaking open all those boxes of cereal. I'm taking him," and the moley man gave a big wink to the woman named Mert, "down to the police station. That's where *all* bad thieves go, and I'll let *them* throw him into a cell for years and years, since he won't tell me his name."

So Mert nodded and clucked her tongue and said what a shame it was that such a little boy was such a big thief, and even, "Ooyay onday ontway ootay airscay the id-kay ootay uchmay."

Davey knew that was pig Latin, but he didn't know it as well as Hobby or Leon, so he didn't know what they were saying, even when the moley man answered, "Onay. I ustjay ontway ootay ootpay the earfay of odgay in ishay edhay."

Then he thought that it was all a joke, and they would let him go, but even if they didn't, it wasn't anything to be frightened of, because Mommy had told him lots of times that the policemen were his friends, and they would protect him. He *liked* policemen, so he didn't care.

Except that if they took him to the policemen, when Mommy came back from the Woolworth's, he would be gone, and *then* would he be in trouble.

But he could not say anything. It was just not right to speak to this moley man. So he walked beside the man from the A&P when he took Davey by the arm and walked him out the back door, and over to a pickup truck with a big A&P lettered on the side. He even sat silently when they drove through town, and turned in at the police station.

And he was silent as the moley man said to the big, fat, red-faced policeman with the sweat-soaked shirt, "This is a little thief I found in the store today, Al. He has been breaking into our boxes, and I thought you would want to throw him in a cell."

Then he winked at the big beefy policeman, and the policeman winked back, and grinned, and then his face got *very* stern and hard, and he leaned across the desk, staring at Davey.

"What's your name, boy?"

His voice was like a lot of mushy stuff swirling around in Mommy's washer. But even so, Davey would have told him his name was David Thomas Cooper and that he lived at 774 Terrace Drive, Mayfair, Ohio . . . if the moley man had not been there.

So he was silent, and the policeman looked up at the moley man, and said very loudly, looking at Davey from the corner of his brown eyes, "Well, Ben, it looks like I'll have to take harsher methods with this criminal. I'll have to show him what happens to people who steal!"

He got up, and Davey saw he was big and fat, and not at all the

way Mommy described policemen. The beefy man took him by the hand, and led him down a corridor, with the moley man coming along too, saying, "Say, ya know, I never been through your drunk tank, Chief. Mind if I tag along?" and the beefy man answered no.

Then came a time of horror for Davey.

They took him to a room where a man lay on a dirty bunk, and he stank and there were summer flies all over him, and he had been sick all over the floor and the mattress and he was laying in it, and Davey wanted to throw up. There was a place with bars on it where a man tried to grab at them as they went past, and the policeman hit his hand through the bars with a big stick on a cord. There were lots of people cooped up and unhappy, and the place was all stinky, and in a little while, Davey was awfully frightened, and started to cry, and wanted to go hide himself, or go home.

Finally, they came back to the first place they had been, and the policeman crouched down next to Davey and shook him as hard as he could by the shoulders, and screamed at him never, never, never to do anything illegal again, or they would throw him in with the man who had clawed out, and throw away the key, and let the man eat Davey alive.

And that made Davey cry more.

Which seemed to make the policeman and the moley man happy, because Davey overheard the policeman say to the moley man named Ben from the A&P, "That'll straighten him out. He's so young, making the right kind of impression on 'em now is what counts. He won't bother ya again, Ben. Leave him here, and he'll ask for his folks soon enough. Then we can take him home."

The moley man shook hands with the policeman, and thanked him, and said he could get any cut of meat he wanted at the store whenever he came in, and thanks again for the help.

Then, just as the moley man was leaving, he stooped down, and looked straight at Davey with his piercing eyes.

"You ever gonna steal anything from cereal boxes again?"

Davey was so frightened, he shook his head no, and the tear lines on his face felt sticky as he moved.

The moley man stood up, and grinned at the policeman, and walked out, leaving Davey behind, in that place that scared him so.

And it was true.

Davey never *would* steal from the cereal boxes again, he knew. As a matter of fact, he hated cereal now.

And he didn't much care for *them,* either.

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